

lean Epstein

jean epstein

IN THE UNITED STATES

EDITED BY

GIDEON BACHMANN

IN COLLABORATION WITH

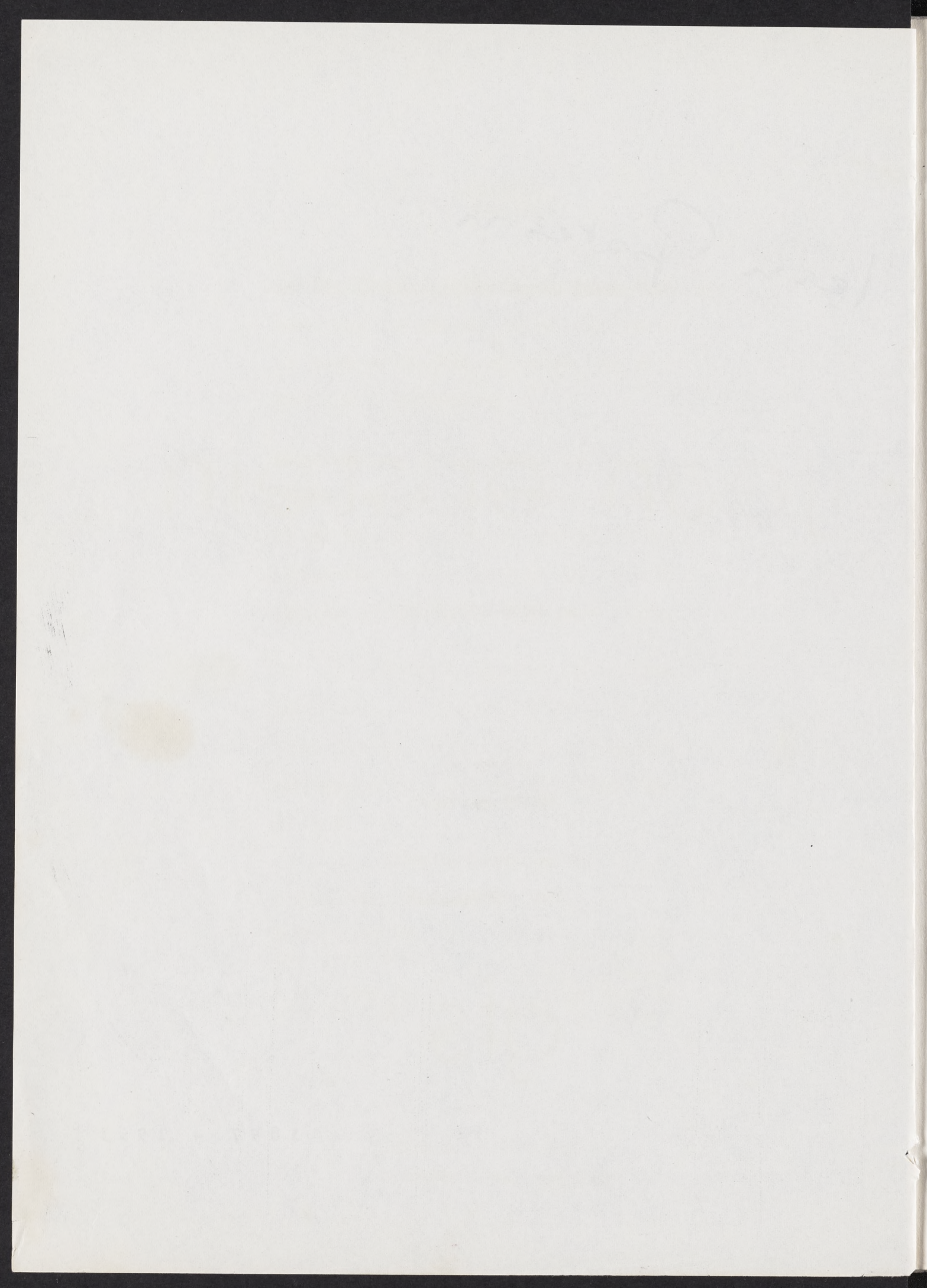
JEAN BOULLENGIER

gfs

THE GROUP FOR FILM STUDY

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1897 - 1953



CINEMAGES
PRESENT

THE FIRST COMPREHENSIVE PRESENTATION OF THE WORK

OF

jean epstein

IN THE UNITED STATES

EDITED BY

GIDEON BACHMANN

IN COLLABORATION WITH

JEAN BENOIT LEVY

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THE GROUP FOR FILM STUDY

PUBLISHERS OF CINEMAGES

CINEMAGES
PRESENT

GFS (The Group for Film Study, Inc.), is a
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Screenings are held to arouse the public's
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THE FIRST COMPREHENSIVE PRESENTATION OF THE WORK OF JEAN EPSTEIN IN THE USA

CINEMAGES # 3

There will be two major events in connection with this memorial presentation. Films marked by * have been flown here especially from the Cinematheque Francaise in Paris

1. JEAN EPSTEIN MEMORIAL - Special Press and Trade inaugural screening. GFS 1955 Series special event No. 1

March 8, 1955, at 8:15 PM - Auditorium of the Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53rd Street, New York City

Speakers:

Jean Benoit-Levy
Gideon Bachmann

Films:

- *COEUR FIDELE (1923) - the county fair sequence (excerpt)
- LA CHUTE DE LA MAISON USHER (1928) - the burial sequence (excerpt)
- *FINIS TERRAE (1929) - the entire film
- LE TEMPESTAIRES (1947) - example of slow-motion sound (excerpt)

2. JEAN EPSTEIN MEMORIAL - GFS 1955 series special event No. 2

At the auditorium of Washington Irving Highschool, 40 Irving Place, New York City.
Date to be announced

Films:

- LA CHUTE DE LA MAISON USHER (1928) - the entire film
- *L'OR DES MERS (1932) - the entire film

NOTE

All Epstein films shown during this memorial, except LE TEMPESTAIRES, were produced as silents. The musical accompaniment used here was scored especially for this memorial by William S. Kenly III.

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THE FIRST COMPREHENSIVE PRESENTATION OF THE WORK OF JEAN EPSTEIN IN THE USA

LIST OF SPONSORS

Rudolph Arnheim	David Flaherty	Rohama Lee
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Leo Dratfield	William S. Kenly	Roger Tilton
Paul Falkenberg	Arthur Knight	Parker Tyler
Arthur Fellig	Siegfried Kracauer	Herman G. Weinberg

EXCERPTS FROM LETTERS RECEIVED

"The Epstein Memorial project is indeed an unprecedented film activity for this country.."

- Frank Stauffacher

"Your program .. will help greatly to give this important director the place he deserves."

- Pierre Donzelot

"..it will be a most interesting and worthy event in every way."

- Bosley Crowther

"..his was an important talent that has been too long ignored in this country."

- Arthur Knight

"..your idea of an Epstein Memorial is excellent."

- Paul Falkenberg

"It is high time the American audience knew more about the important French pioneer.. To honor his memory is to honor the great but forgotten aims of the advanced film artist of the twenties."

- Hans Richter

"Jean Epstein was a scientist, a philosopher, a great artist; but for me he was that which is the more rare, and which cannot be defined - a friend."

- Jean Benoit-Levy

The criteria employed in the judging of motion pictures are, of all the arts, the least congealed. Even the inclusion of films under the general heading of "arts" is contested by some writers.

Each generation evolves its own values, its own moral code, its own concept of what makes a good film. Only with a relative contemporary point of view is any kind of judgement permissible. We do not judge Edison's methods by today's yardstick. In appreciating properly a work of art, be it a painting, a building or a piece of music, we automatically see it in the perspective of its day.

And yet, without the study of history, we deeply appreciate a piece of Greek sculpture, and, knowing nothing at all about music, we thrill to the intimate appeal of a Tartini or an early Bach. There exist, then, works of art of such universal significance, of such beauty and human feeling, that transcend time and period, and, defying ignorance and pettiness, remain forever as beacons in the night.

Without entering into the interminable controversy over what makes film "cinematic" - without pointing to the role Epstein's films play in the history of the cinema - without adding to the debate over the retrogression introduced by sound - and without employing any contemporary perspectives: when we see a film by Jean Epstein we are touched by such poetry, such feeling, such deep understanding of the human element, that they become for us works of art of timeless significance.

This would suffice. To be able to present to an "uninitiated" audience the work of a man so outstanding, is justification enough for arranging a memorial to him one year after his untimely death. And yet, lest we be accused of sentimental motivations, some of the concrete reasons for Epstein's mastery should be mentioned.

Epstein was the master of technique. His analytical mind and scientific training resulted in a slow and deliberate method. An artist is an artist by measure of his control over his own limitations, and in this sense, Epstein was the artist supreme. There is nothing superfluous in his films. Every shot, every slightest tilt, every object, every movement, every frame of film had its place in the magnificent rhythm of his montage. His insistence on dramatic importance of the smallest elements, his near obsession with reality in its minutest detail, his pioneering use of opticals, camera effects and angles for creating mood, his impressionistic symbolism achieved without apparent effort, his preoccupation with set design, camera motion and creative use of silence, his shying away from the glamour of moviemaking, his economy of technique and, not least, his unshakable integrity, these are some of the ingredients which helped make his films the masterpieces they are.

We live in a period of few values. There is no mysticism in the atomic age. Our philosophy goes only as far as our life-span. We have accepted the inevitability of death and have lost faith in humanity as a continuing force. Our films have retired into the shell of concern with the very material or the very fantastic. It seems good at a time like this to freshen up at a well of belief in human values, human transcendence, human significance. For to Epstein man is both problem and answer, and as we follow his fleeting images our minds become a little less concerned with ourselves, our fear a little less acute, and our philosophy a little less destructive.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES:

Marie Epstein

Jean Epstein was born on March 25, 1897, in Warsaw, Poland, of a French father and a Polish mother.

From 1907 to 1914 he studied in a French College in Fribourg, Switzerland, and from 1914 to 1920 he studied medicine in France, at Lyon.

It was there that he met Auguste Lumiere and collaborated with him on bibliographic research.

In 1920 he sent his first manuscript to the La Sirene publishing house, whose director, Paul Laffitte, not only accepted it for publication, but also invited the young author, who was still unknown, to come to Paris, in order to work with him as his secretary.

The medical student, in his enthusiasm for letters and the arts, interrupted his scientific studies and began his literary career.

Paris:

From 1920 to 1922 he published his first books: "La Poesie D'Aujourd'hui", "Un Nouvel Etat D'Intelligence - Le Phenomene Litteraire", "La Lyrosophie", and "Bonjour, Cinema".

"Bonjour, Cinema", a collection of notes and poems, was the first praise given to the screen by the man who was to devote to it all his activity.

The first time Jean Epstein stepped into a studio was for the purpose of assisting Louis Delluc during the shooting of the film LE TONNERRE. But this was only the beginning. A short time later he met Jean Benoit-Levy right in the offices of the La Sirene Publishers, who proposed that he make PASTEUR with him, a film for the centenary of the great scientist. This was his first film.

In 1923 he was engaged by Pathe-Consortium Cinema as director, and it was for this company that he produced, immediately after "L'Auberge Rouge", (The Red Inn), of Balzac, another script, this time an original one, his famous COEUR FIDELE, which constitutes the true revelation of his personality.

The filmography and bibliography given here contain the complete list of his works, both in the film and in literature. Some of them in particular mark the great periods of his career which has made of Jean Epstein one of the great pioneers of French avant-garde films.

I need not speak of the public life of these films which thousands of spectators have seen on the screen and which the international press has judged. But I can give some idea of their private life, made of hopes and disappointments, of difficulties and successes which each one of them represented for the man who brought them into being.

COEUR FIDELE was filmed from an original theme by Jean Epstein. He himself admitted that he had written this script in one night, and that was the case; but months and months before that night, he was already saying:

"I dream of a drama set in a merry-go-round.

The tragic element, thus focused, would increase the pictorial effect and would

add to it that of giddiness and whirling."

He was thus able to write in one night what he had been dreaming of for so long. It was the first time that the motion picture camera was placed, not in front of, but on the merry-go-round itself, and revolved with it. The public was not used to this motion, and the day of its opening, in 1923, in a theatre on the Boulevards of Paris, it noisily manifested its surprise: some people, made ill, protested - others, taking a fancy to the giddiness, approved. This created a fine stir. The manager of the theatre was worried: "Is there going to much more of this merry-go-round sort of thing?...Because if there is, I'm going to have to call the police." Since then, this "carnival" sequence has become a screen classic.

I have always admired the objective calm with which my brother accepted the reactions which his works provoked. These reactions certainly did not leave him indifferent, but he had something to say and he had to say it, whatever

happened. That alone was really important.

THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER dominates the whole of the second period: Jean Epstein, having founded his own producing group, was able to bring into being this subject which had also been haunting him for a long time. What captivated him in the tales of Edgar Allan Poe was their poetic charm much more than their morbid charm. He saw nothing horrible in them:

"All these dead persons," (he used to say),
"are only slightly dead. Madeline and
Roderick feel that they are going to die,
just as we feel sleep overcome us. Roderick
lies in wait for the sounds at the threshold
of the tomb as we lie in wait at the door
of a room for a tired nocturnal guest to
wake. Mystery is there, where an equilibrium
is reached in which a soul is shown now in
life and now in death."

In order to express this mystery and this charm, Jean Epstein used all his masterful technique, and it is the first time that he gave such dramatic importance to slow motion, which he was later to use regularly in order to lose no part of the most fleeting aspects of life.

It is interesting to note that this film, kept by all film libraries as a museum piece, was re-issued in 1948 for the general public and ran for several months in the same theatre in the Montmartre quarter where it had been shown for the first time, twenty years before, in 1928.

In that same year, 1928, Jean Epstein went on to a totally different genre: FINIS TERRAE marks his first encounter with the sea - the Sea which was to exert so strong an influence on the third and last period of his career.

Irresistibly drawn by nature, he turned away from all that is conventional, even in the slightest degree - he preferred the rough fisher folk to actors, and gave them a very simple story, which had really taken place among them, to interpret, and which they could readily re-live before a camera. Thus it was that a whitlow could be the subject of a drama, since this drama was actually lived in an island in Brittany. He himself gave a name to this period in his career: "At The Approaches To Truth", and under this same sign of Truth he later created MOR VRAN and L'OR DES MERS.

"No set", (he wrote), "no costume can have the aspect, the cast of truth. No professional faking can produce the admirable technical gestures of a topman or a fisherman. A smile of kindness, a cry of rage are as difficult to imitate as a rainbow in the sky or as the turbulent ocean."

Shortly after the war, in 1947, he returned to Brittany, found again the sea and its people, and produced LE TEMPESTAIRE, his last cinematographic expression. It also gave him the joy of hearing the thousand unknown voices which he had succeeded in giving to the Tempest, by virtue of the slow sound which, like slow motion, he had placed at the service of drama and poetry.

"With each passing second, the sea utters another cry."

He then devoted his time to writing; but the films still remained the object of his greatest concern. He published successively two psycho-philosophical essays on the seventh art: "L'Intelligence D'une Machine" and "Le Cinema du Diable".

On April 2, 1953, he still had many things to say.

He left two posthumous manuscripts - the summa of his conceptions and of his knowledge, written to the glory of an art and of a profession by a man who had devoted to them the best years of his life.

No -
another
film in
1948

JEAN EPSTEIN:

Jean Benoit-Levy

I should first like to thank Gideon Bachmann of The Group for Film Study, and Jonas Mekas who had the stirring idea of dedicating a Memorial to Jean Epstein and his work. We are also particularly grateful to Richard Griffith, Curator of the Film Library of the Museum of Modern Art, thanks to whom this ceremony could take place in this museum dedicated to modern art as well as to the brief but prodigiously fertile history of the film. Within this history, Jean Epstein holds a place of the first rank which my colleagues and friends have tried briefly to describe in this brochure.

For my part, I would like to try to write these few lines as a friend of Jean Epstein. I feel at this time how true it is that pure friendship is clothed in reticence, which causes us to express ourselves with uneasiness concerning it and that we would prefer jealousy to keep what we feel in our hidden garden if, on occasion, we did not feel it a duty to bring forth our contribution as a witness.

I met Jean Epstein at the Sirene publishing house in 1921, when that firm, under the aegis of Paul Laffitte, a man of great heart and a highly distinguished mind, was sheltering some young people who were trying to find their way. Jean Epstein had then just arrived from Lyon, where he had worked with Dr. Auguste Lumiere, the great bio-chemist who, with his brother, invented the "Cinematograph", which made possible the first public projection upon a screen of a film, turned by a new device.

Until then, Jean Epstein had, while working with Auguste Lumiere, been pursuing his medical studies, and he was a scientist, who was to remain a man of science all his life, who had just plunged into a literary life. This resulted in the first work of Jean Epstein, "La Lyrosophie", which revealed the depth of his philosophic thought. It was at this time that I had the idea of dedicating a film to Louis Pasteur on the occasion of his centennial celebration, and I enlisted in this adventure the man with whom I discussed films every day at La Sirene, Jean Epstein.

From this collaboration was born a friendship which has not ceased even with the death of Jean Epstein, since I still feel it as immediate and as intense as ever! From the professional point of view, it will remain to my honor that I was associated in some way with the first and the last films of Jean Epstein. Between these two periods lies a long friendship which would be difficult to relate, for, once again, so permanent a feeling cannot be related, but only proven.

I have said that Jean Epstein was a scientist, but this basic quality did not prevent him from being a great artist, in fact, quite the contrary. The study of the sciences and the humanities was just the thing to enable him to acquire a solid cultural foundation, constituting the permanent foundation of his genius. For all those who hold that works of art are the product of spontaneous creation, Jean Epstein remains an example of the value of method and of technical mastery placed at the service of his inspiration. The sciences with which he constantly occupied his mind permitted him to accomplish the essential act of the artist, which consists of choosing. He had thus acquired a mental discipline which directed his prodigious imagination into literary or cinematographic channels. His imagination was in constant gestation and gave rise to silent absences which some persons took for haughtiness, but which his intimates knew must be fertile. Besides, at any time, if he was provoked, he knew how to give his mind an encyclopedic character, and to discourse on any subject, whether of an astronomical, mathematical, philosophical or poetic nature. His mind was constantly working, and unfortunately he had time to meditate and work at home, for, as that other great artist, my friend Abel Gance said in substance at the Jean Epstein Memorial in Cannes, we authors of films all must wait for someone to give us the means to express ourselves. Yes, alas! we have an art which can create nothing without substantial means, an industry-art. It is as if a writer had to wait for a diamond pen at a fabulous price in order to be able to write each one of his works.

Fortunately the writer is still free, and Jean Epstein, while waiting for "the producer", was able to pour out into his books the fruit of his fertile imagination. His head constantly seethed almost to the boiling point. Indeed, Jean Epstein's genius ended by destroying his physical being which was too small to contain it; but there remain his works, of which you have seen some examples. There remains the very great part he played in the invention of that marvelous language, equally as marvelous as life, whose task it is to express: the language of films.

Yes, Jean Epstein was a scientist, a philosopher, a great artist, but for me he was something which is more rare: a friend. I feel that I have expressed very poorly the feelings which move me concerning this friend, but his sister Marie knows that the quality of such a friendship cannot be expressed and that the essential thing is to try to keep for Jean Epstein that place in the first rank to which he is entitled in the history (otherwise so disappointing) of an art which, in spite of all our blighted hopes or even perhaps because of them, we continue to love and serve. Jean Epstein loved the film, he believed in its destiny as a means of expression, and it is to the task of pointing to him as an example that we, his friends and his colleagues, must dedicate ourselves.

JEAN EPSTEIN AND THE ART OF THE SILENT FILM

Jonas Mekas

By reading the articles, reviews and books on cinema, published in the early twenties, I was surprised by the enthusiasm of these people for the art of the film. Though Jean Epstein was primarily a film-maker, his numerous essays on film art have greatly contributed to the growth of film as art. This is what Abel Gance, that other giant of French cinema, says about Epstein as a film writer:

"I would like to imprint in some pure corner of your memory the name of Jean Epstein, and not only as one of the greatest architects of images, but also, and particularly, as a great thinker and a misunderstood philosopher. In his books on cinema, "Bonjour, Cinema", "L'Intelligence D'Une Machine", "Le Cinema Du Diable", and an unpublished manuscript, "Alcool et Cinema", the books which are the most extraordinary from all I know, Epstein has dissected cinema in its elements like a spectroscope dissects light - reaching its most subtle nuances. But, like those stars, the light of which we perceive only after they are long gone, the radio-activity of Jean Epstein's books will not reach us for many years to come. But let me predict it, his books will be the bibles of the film-makers of the coming generations. Jean Epstein was, and still is, together with Jean Cocteau, one of the most extraordinary personalities of the intellect."

There are several themes which reoccur very often in Epstein's work and in his writings. To begin with, a mention should be made of his preoccupation with movement, the basic expression of film art. While the theatre is based on the spoken word, the first principle of film art is plastic movement. Movements of the objects, movements of the camera, movements of light, exaggerated motion, slow motion: In Epstein's work we can see the most beautiful examples of the right use of various speeds and rhythms of movement. The movements which reveal the very essence of the situations and things. "In the cinema", so wrote Epstein, "the movement is not separable from the form." In cinema, the form creates

movement and the movement creates form. By discarding the empiricism of the movement as a separate action, and by uniting motion and form into one, cinema, logically, had to discard the normal movement. In Epstein's films the movement is regulated and controlled by the dramatic movements of the theme. The movement which was almost completely lost with sound film, the plastic movement of Eisenstein's, Griffith's, and even Fairbanks' and Chaplin's films, pantomime and gestures, sound pulled cinema back to the stage.

Mention should be made of Epstein's efforts to purify the cinema, to clean the art of the film from the remnants of all the other arts, and, particularly, from literature and theatre. "Every art builds its own forbidden city," wrote Epstein, "its own autonomic, exclusive, specific domain which is hostile to everything that is not from it. Though it sounds strange when you say it, literature in the first place should be literary, theatre theatrical, and film - cinematic. The film should seek to become more and more cinematic, I mean, to use only photogenic elements. Photogenity is the purest expression of the film." And, "If the film, instead of pretending to imitate literature, would have exploited dream and fantasy, it would have established more quickly its own mode of expression: A mode of expression which is of a great originality and of an extraordinary strength. The language of the film would not have become degenerated by the vain efforts to repeat what spoken word and literature can do so much easier without film."

What Epstein understood by the real cinema will help to illustrate the burial sequence from the FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER, presented on this memorial program. THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER contains several good examples of real cinema, something that never could be produced on the stage. Special mention should be given to Epstein's use of objects. In Epstein's films the objects became animated. They play an equal part with actors. The objects in his films serve the same purpose as actors, they have their own characters and parts to play, they are active participants - the tablecloth, candles, or a hammer, a veil - they are active participants in the creation of the mood and drama of Epstein's films. This is possible to achieve only in cinema. The theatre is unable to approach the props or an actor's face so close as to give it a new and revealing meaning. "One of the greatest powers of cinema is its animism," wrote Epstein. "On the screen there is nothing dead. The objects have attitudes. Trees are gesticulating. The mountains make us to be aware of them. Every accessory becomes a personage. Every small fraction of the decor takes a particular expression."

"This is a common anecdote by now," wrote Epstein in another place, "about those small American millionaires who cried seeing themselves for the first time on the screen. And those who do not cry, become troubled. It would be wrong to see in this only their preoccupation with themselves. That would only show that we do not understand the real mission of the cinema. The lens of the motion picture camera is, as Appollinaire qualifies it, a surreal (this having nothing to do with the surrealism as we know it today), an eye endowed with an inhuman analytical property. This is an eye without prejudice, without moral, not influenced, and it sees in our faces and in our movements, lines which we, being charged with sympathies and antipathies, customs and thoughts, are not able to see any more."

Going still further from theatre, Epstein had to solve another problem: acting and actors. He solved it by not using actors, and when he did use them, he used them only as a rough visual material. Epstein's work is an example of a highly personal approach where everything, every expression, every movement is calculated, has a meaning and has to contribute to the film's unity. There is no place for stars. In Epstein's films material is united by the creative mind of the director. And that's why there is a definite style in his films, as in the films of Lubtich, Dovzhenko, or in the films of Orson Welles. There is a director's personality that gives to a film its style, like in every creative work.

As one of the final points, I would like to mention the silence of Epstein's films itself. Though there are many silent films to which we could add a musical sound track, without any change of the director's intentions, and though there is today a very common practice among film societies to play music with silent films, my belief is that there are films, *THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER* being one of them, which are silent not because they do not have sound, but because they were made to be silent. Silence here was used as one of their composite elements, as one would use sound.

But these various characteristics, which I have here shortly touched, are, more or less, basic problems and basic characteristics of the silent film esthetics in general. Epstein was not the only one who tried to use film intelligently. He is one of many. Some of them succeeded more, some of them less. The art of the film is only in its beginning. By a constant re-screening of the silent and sound film classics, by seeing and studying them, we can get a better understanding of this young and exciting art of the film.

NOTE: Quotations taken from Jean Epstein's books: "L'Etna", "Le Cinema Du Diable", "Alcool et Cinema", and from Abel Gance's article in "Cahiers du Cinema".

THE CREATIVE WORK OF JEAN EPSTEIN

Henri Langlois

It is regrettable that it was through his death that people were made aware of Jean Epstein's life. What is the use of paying tribute to the dead if, while living, they were buried? And did we have to wait for Epstein to go in order to wonder whether he had genius? Therefore, for the first time, in June 1953, "Les Cahiers du Cinema" took an interest in Jean Epstein.

Wouldn't it have been more decent to give him some space while he was still alive, to stress the importance of his research, of everything he could still tell us, of the sum total of the knowledge that disappeared with him? Wasn't it really the function of a magazine that claims to be devoted to the art of the film and to be above commercial interests to defend a living man, in the face of opposition, and to force the movie world, so enslaved to fashion, to appraise *LE TEMPESTAIRE*, instead of condemning it sight unseen?

But it would have taken courage, it would have taken eyes to see, to be in advance of public opinion, instead of allowing it while seeming to precede it.

Perhaps we would have seen that talking version of *THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER* that Epstein wanted so badly to make, and which he would have filmed if but one voice had been raised in the press to stress its scope. That would have been more worthwhile than giving him funeral orations.

Some of these, incidentally, were most disconcerting; for instance, the one by Gance, another living corpse, whose *DIVINE TRAGEDY* we will learn too late, did not deserve all those jeers and would have brought in more money than it cost.

Epstein is not only the director of *COEUR FIDELE*, *LA GLACE A TROIS FACES*, and *THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER*. Epstein did not leave the films after having made *LA BELLE NIVERNAISE* or *MAUPRAT*. Epstein never abandoned the films; his work began with *PASTEUR* in 1922, and ended with *LE TEMPESTAIRE* in 1947. He never forfeited the film world's respect, and his so-called pot-boilers could be acknowledged by him without shame, while this is not true of so many others.

We wanted to emphasize this by having the Cannes Festival pay tribute to *LES ADVENTURES DE ROBERT MACAIRE*, a simple film romance. There was sound reason for Jean Cocteau to point out the quality of its images, its modern character of its rhythm, all of its extreme finesse, foreshadowing the technique of the *CHILDREN OF PARADISE* and *LUMIERE D'ETE*. Time has given *ROBERT MACAIRE* its rightful place. To Epstein it was only a commercial film.

If Epstein knew particularly hard times toward 1935, as the history of his film-making shows, he learned very quickly what conclusions to draw from them.

Forced to play second fiddle to men who no longer understood him, he rapidly learned how to recover, to take refuge in short features rather than to stop making true cinema. How many others have had that kind of courage?

By then Epstein, past master of rhythm, had already learned utter economy of technique. He exceeded what everybody thought to be the real nature of cinematic movement, and I remember the astonishment of some people that this man who had shown how to make the camera whirl, this Ph. D. of Traveling Shots, could restrict himself to fixed locales. They did not understand that this return to his beginnings was one more proof of Jean Epstein's mastery.

Is this not the technique toward which all who understand the evolution of motion pictures are moving? Is this not the technique that will be more and more that of the new processes of the films?

LE TEMPESTAIRE, which no one went to see because of the stupid comments directed against the film, is a striking example of this.

But we will talk about LE TEMPESTAIRE later. Let us take a look at the whole of a body of work that already seems very superior to that of directors who were better acquainted than Epstein with the constancy of fortune and glory.

Epstein has been compared with Vigo and there is a certain relationship between their work. If Vigo right from the start attains a cinematic state of grace which is the absolute towards which Epstein moves, if his situation is unique, this miracle is explained by the fact that Epstein's work and all his theories and research came first, opened his eyes, and remain a lesson, and not an example, for us.

That is why we smile when people write that LA BELLE NIVERNAISE, LE LION DES MOGOLS, SIX ET DEMI-OUZE, represent works which Epstein undertook in order to eat, and which disgusted him with motion pictures.

These people can have understood nothing about his research, about his life's aims, if they deny the role of these films, which represent the different stages of an experiment.

After discovering as a spectator the intelligence of a machine, he was impelled to prove it.

It made no difference what kind of film he made; there is not one in which Epstein failed to advance in his quest.

It is 1922 and Epstein has never held a camera in his hand. PASTEUR, his first picture, is both a popular and an official work designed to celebrate the anniversary of the scientist's death. He knows nothing about technique; he must learn his trade. He owes this chance to the prestige of the name of Benoit-Levy. That name, belonging to one of the greatest pioneers of motion pictures, was then as famous as Goldwyn's is today. It is thanks to this famous name that Jean Benoit-Levy and Jean Epstein began their film careers.

He is compelled simultaneously to learn his trade, to do an original piece of work, and yet to avoid shocking the public, therefore conform to a certain degree. He must at one and the same time please the critics, his peers, his backers, the Sorbonne, and the Managers! Epstein won out on all counts. His film, a solid bit of work, it disappoints no one, not even us, because, apart from the authenticity of the pictures, the truth of the characters, the soundness of the historical reconstruction, there are already images in this film that represent something unprecedented in motion pictures.

Solely by the power of the lens, and through the quality of the photography, the angles, and the lighting, almost without any trick photography, Epstein snatched from their banality test-tubes and gauges, all the humble laboratory objects that now became fairyland objects, symbols of the miracle of discovery and scientific research.

This transfiguration, which until then had been possible only by means of the magic of the word or the brush, became possible in motion pictures. The still-lives in PASTEUR, which do not seem to have startled his contemporaries, but which dazzle us, are to modern films what the glasses or bottles in Braque's and Picasso's cubist still-lives are to modern art. They are the key to Epstein's work. Here is what he himself said:

"During the making of PASTEUR, I contrived all sorts of ways of seeing how things could be made to look from all sorts of different angles. I had taken many views looking down and my greatest worry during the editing was to see all those downward scenes where the spectator seemed to be walking on the ceiling, to be seeing Pasteur's life from the ceiling. It was not pleasant, it was a terrible worry, what would the public say? My main recollection of PASTEUR is trying to make the film come down off the ceiling.

"In that movie I wanted to see how a camera was used, how it was loaded. There were alambics, retorts, all sorts of laboratory material, but photographed in such a way that they are concrete objects and at the same time, a transfiguration, a dream."

That this should have gone unnoticed is normal, since the spectators' eyes were not yet as sensitive as ours. But Epstein knew. He knew that he was right in believing in the intelligence of a machine and that he was capable of using it.

PASTEUR was a technical exercise. L'AUBERGE ROUGE, COEUR FIDÈLE, LA BELLE NIVERNAISE were to be exercises in style in which Epstein assimilated all the possibilities, all the discoveries, all the known aspects of the cinema. And yet those films, which technically did not reveal anything that had not already been discovered, were to be hailed by all the critics as revolutionary works.

1922 was the year of DON JUAN AND FAUST. L'Herbier had already stated the essential in LE CARNIVAL DES VÉRITÉS, L'HOMME DU LARGE, and VILLA DESTIN. In EL DORADO he simply synthesized all his previous research. Gance had just completed LA ROUE, which seemed to be the consummation of his work. Delluc had finished LA FEMME DE NULLE PART, and Germaine Dulac had given, in LE SOURIANTE MADAME BEUDET, the synthesis of all the discoveries of the previous five years. Feyder had shown in CRATINQUEBILLE that they were already comprehensible to the mass public.

It looked as though the French avant-garde was going to sit back and assimilate. It was at this point that Epstein came along with his ideas that were so new, so deliberately modern, so in line with his predecessors' discoveries that they are unrecognizable simply because Epstein stands out from the 19th century world of which Gance, Dulac, and L'Herbier were definitely a part, and which they did not seek to leave. To understand this, it should suffice to read any one of Epstein's books. He was a man of his time. That explains the effects of his films.

What was L'AUBERGE ROUGE? A costume film depicting the atmosphere of the Restoration and Directoire periods. With only extremely limited means we are transported back to the world of Lenotre's historical novelettes, but also to Balzac's world. The actors are excellent, they belong, seem true to life and not disguised. All sorts of accessories give the work an authentic character lacking in many a film of our time. It is simultaneously reminiscent of the Theatre Libre, of an exploration into the past, and of the halls of the Waxworks Museum during the Revolution. But it is also something else: the assimilation of L'Herbier's discoveries about film language. Epstein took them over, digested them, and spewed them forth again: he fulfilled them.

Epstein studied everything: theories on the subjective image, the value of atmosphere, the significance of composition of levels, the unclear and the superposition of images, rhythm, editing, interpolations, flashbacks, slow motion. He wanted to synthesize this new language and he succeeded. In *L'AUBERGE ROUGE* he gathered every difficulty and he overcame each one.

Thus the action goes on simultaneously in both the Restoration and Directoire periods. It is dual, at the same time direct and narrated: during the Restoration people are talking around a table. One of them is telling a story and by a subtle play of montage and division of the screen into two parts, we see at the same time both the drama and the effects it brings about on the faces of the conversing group. Unknown to the others, one of them is a criminal. Little by little we become convinced of this solely through the logic of the gestures, expressions, and context: the story into which we plunge as we go back into the past. To this classic form of wholly external film narration is opposed that of story-telling using all the avant-garde's discoveries to help us see not only with our own eyes, but with those of the principal protagonist, and all done with such mastery, such an abundance of carefully chosen effects, and with such sober choice of these, that *L'AUBERGE ROUGE*, instead of being simply an application of acquired discoveries, offers new points of departure. Already in this film, by means of an iris opening, a head takes on for several seconds the aspect of a death's head. It is up to us to see it, it is not a symbol, it is an optical illusion. Already in this film, objects (playing cards, jewels) suddenly take over the screen and become characters. These close-ups enhance the novelty of this film. A costume film, *L'AUBERGE ROUGE*, by means of the angles of its shots, corresponds to a new vision of reality which suddenly throws back into the past the refinement of *EL DORADO*, Griffith's style, the frames of *LA ROUE*, the black background of *LA SOURIANTE MADAME BEUDET*. In the latter two of these films when objects or a locomotive were shown, the frame was so made that the object, the locomotive, seemed thinned down. In *L'AUBERGE ROUGE*, the objects are magnified, they really take possession of the whole screen like the objects in Picasso's, Leger's, or Gris' still-lives. They are epic, and the movie suddenly projects an effect of a true automobile, and not, as in previous films, of automobiles like those of 1900 sacrificing to old myths by means of decor.

After assimilating L'Herbier's discoveries, Epstein went to work on Gance's, to the documentary on the song of the rail, and we have *COEUR FIDELE*.

This work is the high point of impressionism of movement, but it is also the triumph of the modern spirit. Again it was the new eye, the new conception of cinematic design we had been shown in *L'AUBERGE ROUGE*, which had been seen only, before Epstein, in a few American movies from Triangle. A shot of such a kind that, instead of being framed in the black velvet outline of the screen, it destroys it, overflows it, gives the impression of being fully exposed to the air, of being extended into space. It is enough to compare a still from *LA ROUE* to one from *COEUR FIDELE* to understand this difference. That is why *COEUR FIDELE* was such a controversial film. Its images were seemingly in relief; they literally burst through the screen to such an extent that in theatres audiences suffered physically from dizziness attacks, or nausea, as they watched the carousel whirl around. "*COEUR FIDELE*", said Epstein, "achieved for me what I call the photogeny of movement. In the days of the silent films, when speech had not subjugated the rhythm of the montage to its own rhythm, we could really edit in the rhythm that seemed cinematically necessary to the picture. This rhythm had its importance and I made it a rule, I always make it my rule, whenever I am not hampered by speech or by action in the interior of a frame, to show only shots that have a simple relationship between them, as in music. And this is all the more sensitive as the shots that we use become shorter. When you edit five or six meters of shots this is not very important for the eye. But as soon as you edit 40 centimeters at a time, it is very important to put 40 and 20 and not 42, 46, 48, for the eye doesn't follow the rhythm. You must give it correct tempo. Especially in sequences of some films where there is a rapid rhythm of images,

the lengths are always calculated at a ratio of 1 to 2, 2 to 3, 3 to 4. One shouldn't exceed 4. A fifth is already something to which people are no longer sensitive. The very impressive montages of LA ROUE are all done in this way, or at least so I have always suspected. The montage of LA ROUE must have been done using this system of the dressmaker's tape-measure."

But if the carnival sequence was the essential element of COEUR FIDÈLE in Epstein's recollection, it is not and was not the whole thing to the public. In it they found all of modern poetry, the port of Marseilles, the quais, the boats, the dirty rooms, all that world that FIEVRES had already attempted to depict without being able to leave the abstract, that world that was one of the great inspiring themes of the literature of that day and which was to add to the film's splendor. It was the QUAI DES BRUMES of the Twenties.

For everybody else COEUR FIDÈLE was a point of departure, for Epstein it was only a point of arrival. He had done with the discoveries of our first avant-garde; he was eager to test himself on a simpler story, on a slower type of movement.

In fact, like all young men, after assimilating the French motion pictures' discoveries, Epstein felt the need to achieve the fluidity of a Stiller or a Griffith, or all those who, in Hollywood or Sweden, were trying to come close to the deep origins of simplicity. So we got LA BELLE NIVERNAISE, one of the purest, most classic, most exquisite works of the French silent cinema. If the carnival sequence in COEUR FIDÈLE is not a showy piece, it did inspire many other daring pieces. LA BELLE NIVERNAISE, with its rhythm that the intellect cannot grasp, its perfect simplicity, its masterly economy of style, its wish to subordinate everything to its subject matter, is certainly the film that France can best offer to match the masterpieces of the Swedish school.

There are films that never disappoint, and Epstein, after this success, had only to continue along the same lines. His name would be mentioned alongside Renoir's and Feyder's; he would never have known vicissitudes, would never have disappointed us. But just thinking that he might have done so reveals our lack of understanding of him. He came to films for other purposes: writing was not enough for him; he wanted to be a poet. He had said too much about the intelligence of a machine not to try to go the whole way, to see just how far the machine would follow him.

He left Pathe, went to Albatros where large resources were made available to him. He was admired, his talent was understood, and he was assigned Mosjoukine. He made the LION DES MOGOLS, and it was a failure.

LE LION DES MOGOLS dates from the end of 1924, a year which was a turning point in motion picture history. It was the year of the RAPACES, of the beginning of the revolt against the technical preoccupation of the French and German avant-garde: the attitude of a whole generation of young people, nourished by American movies, who shrugged their shoulders at CALIGARI because they believed in NOSFERATU. Those young people had had their fill of the avant-garde in L'INHUMAINE. They were already expressing themselves by applauding ENTR'ACTE and Clarence Brown. For these youths, LA BELLE NIVERNAISE was a union that Epstein dissolved. For their part all the supporters of expressionist and impressionist research did not hide their disappointment either. They were expecting a sequel to COEUR FIDÈLE, perhaps to BRASIER ARDENT. They were served up Ivan Mosjoukine in golden tights and a story that was an imitation of Maurice Dekobra. Everything was false from beginning to end. Everything was artificial, the characters' motivations and their country. It harked back to the Russian ballet and was soaked through with bourgeois conformity and sanctimonious and imbecilic naivete. We can understand why Mitry was indignant. Yet both sides were mistaken. They were wrong, because Epstein was after something else, and what Mosjoukine wanted was of little importance to him, since LE LION DES MOGOLS seemed a pretext that would allow him to find what he was seeking. Posterity or classical perfection was of little importance to him; he preferred this compromise, a fairy tale for shop girls, shallow and stupid, made to give pleasure and to guarantee that the producer did not lose too much money, because that concession allowed him to do more research. Some critics

of that period said that the film was filled with artistic scenes which made up for everything; others said they were just showy bits without substance. Today we must agree that none of the great scenes of *LE LION DES MOGOLS* were showy bits. They have no connection with the dance staged in *KEAN* and others. They are a transfiguration of the real. *LE LION DES MOGOLS* can be criticized on only one basis: that it is not entirely a fantastic film; that it is not, from first to last, totally impregnated with that surreal realism that Epstein was able to create in the scenes at the Jockey Club, the taxi race, the lights of Paris, the dance at the Masked Ball, without ever leaving realism. For instance, in the scene at the Jockey Club, where the scenery of the Montparnasse cabaret was perfectly recreated, the people look as though they might be found there any evening; everything is transfigured, not by external expressionistic means or by a transformation of the actors' playing, but simply through montage effects and the rhythm that gives the scene a supernatural overtone. Exactly the same thing arouses our enthusiasm in the country inn scene in *L'ATALANTE*. In the race at night the Place de la Concorde is before us, yet it is not the Concorde. It is something we have never before seen, a ghost of the Concorde. He achieved the same sort of thing at the film's beginning with the flight into the woods. Carnival people supposedly representing Hindu horsemen depart from this reality to become characters of a dream in a wood that itself seems the illusion of a wood, and all this without any trick photography, but only through camera work and editing. If only the whole movie had been able to maintain that atmosphere! But we mustn't ask for too much.

The history of motion pictures proves that every new discovery is followed by a step backward. For instance, Gance's 10^e *SYMPHONIE*, which came out in 1917, is plastically much ahead of *LA ROUE*, because Gance's effort in favor of rapid montage forced him, without his being aware of it, to rest and to imitate Griffith's technique of composition of images.

In *LE LION DES MOGOLS* Epstein tried so hard that at times he had to gasp for breath and sit down and rest, far to the rear of his earlier pictures. He was to need two more years of work and discovery before he could fulfill himself in a perfect work, a faultless whole, *THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER*. We can understand why at the time Epstein was indignant at Mitry's criticism: he realized the importance of what he had begun in *LION DES MOGOLS*, and he believed it justified Mosjoukine's scenario and the rest. Hired by Albatros to direct *L'AFFICHE*, after his sister's scenario, he was able, thanks to *LE LION DES MOGOLS*, to take a step forward in the discovery of cinematic poetry. "Here is the cinema's poetry. When we saw a dewdrop on a leaf by the wayside, we stopped and we shot the dewdrop and then used it where we could." But with *L'AFFICHE* and, in a certain sense, *LE DOUBLE AMOUR*, Epstein began to feel the pressure of commercial needs. Undoubtedly there is a bourgeois side, a weighty side to these works. To which Epstein replied, "If you have a fifty-year-old woman playing a young girl, the girl is slow, she slows everything down. It was quite a business to photograph Lissenko. We had to give her roles not exceeding thirty-year-olds and she was then 55; that's why *LE DOUBLE AMOUR* is bourgeois, and *SIX ET DEMI-ONZE* upper bourgeois." In these two pictures Epstein had more resources at his disposal than were available to him at Pathe in 1923. At Albatros, scenery was very important, and Epstein's research was in that field.

L'AFFICHE was supposed to be essentially a film of scenery and objects. In it, the scenery, no longer chosen on the streets, but imagined and re-created, was supposed to be expressive, and the business-man's office, the working girl's bedroom, the street and its posters were all supposed to play their part. In a word Epstein was trying in his own way to apply the techniques of German motion pictures. And the newspapers of the time gave considerable praise to the scenery, the placement of actors, the angles of the shots in relation to that. But, although Epstein was trying to take advantage of the success of German films in order to have his say, he decidedly did not wish to imitate them, but to progress farther. And "unfortunately I had sets that were extremely stiff, immobile, static, intellectual, weighted down and ugly. All that added to Lissenko's weight.

All the decors by Bilinski were in the German style. I had wanted scenery that was alive, light, soaked in reality; what I got was stage sets without grace or movement." Need we add that just because Bilinski had falsified Epstein's thought and wish, just because the decors were done in the German style, his contemporaries realized what Epstein had wished to achieve. The film was within the range of their knowledge and that explains its success. It was a different story with *DOUBLE AMOUR*, a much less well known picture, much more commercial, in the second half of which Lissenko had a role suited to her age. This was the second film with sets, but this time Epstein, after learning his lesson in *L'AFFICHE*, had ordered them from different designers. Undoubtedly for this reason the sets are much more expressive and in a much less obvious way. This is another film of superimposition and lighting, a film of interpretation in which Epstein finally dominated the human element so indispensable to the composition of a film. Unquestionably Epstein always despised actors "because when they do act they are false and when they don't act they are stiff. Actually the more an actor is an actor the more I dislike him, the more difficult it is to handle him so he doesn't seem like an actor. Lissenko and Mosjoukine were very good actors, so they annoyed me as actors." There we hit the real weak point, the only fault of this intellectual French avant-garde, which could not comprehend the importance of the human element which does not understand and did not understand that by despising the actors, it was eventually committing suicide. It is true that the actor is only one element of a film's orchestration; one more letter of the alphabet, but this letter has real value only if it is not abstract, if it is impregnated with human density, truth, authenticity. This is an aspect our avant-garde, which insisted on seeing only letters, often neglected. But it is enough to compare one reel of *COEUR FIDÈLE* with one reel of *DOUBLE AMOUR* to realize the progress that Epstein had achieved. In spite of his credo, he had learned to make use of the human element, to bridge the sort of gap caused by the disproportion between his vigor and mastery of technique and his poor direction of actors. Of course *COEUR FIDÈLE* had been a triumph for Van Daele, but was Van Daele really an actor? Gina Manes and Mathot, on the other hand, were really actors. They both play under their potentialities in *COEUR FIDÈLE*. Go see Gina Manes under Feyder's direction and compare. Don't tell me that *THERESE RAQUIN* was a later work than *COEUR FIDÈLE*. *TRAVAIL* came before, and all you have to do is watch Mathot in *TRAVAIL* and you understand that he was not at his best when Epstein directed him. *DOUBLE AMOUR* is therefore not a minor work and was necessary to Epstein's development. Without the reconciliation or, more precisely, the learning of his trade, how would he have been able to attain that perfection of acting that makes for the unity of *USHER*? Aside from its own merits, *DOUBLE AMOUR*, which was an improvement over *L'AFFICHE*, was necessary to his evolution.

It is a curious thing, but *LES AVENTURES DE ROBERT MACAIRE*, which nobody ever mentions, is a classic. This film of episodes, that went entirely unnoticed, but whose stills seem very interesting, surprised us all in 1936 at the Cercle du Cinema, and the surprise was not entirely due to caprice. Cocteau, Gance, Van Parys and the audience at Cannes Festival, also felt it twenty years later. In this 20-reel picture, there is not one boring moment, not one mistake. The entire period, the romantic atmosphere, is recreated. It is gay, refined, and more modern in spirit and style than many present-day pictures. Of course some will say that Epstein was against this picture. Can we really be sure? It is possible that he attached little importance to it. In any case he would not have made *MAUPRAT* soon after, if he had not made *MACAIRE*. Some people will shrug their shoulders and say that it was the *CAROLINE CHÉRIE* of its time. I am sorry for both them and *CAROLINE*, because if we are comparing and looking for a present-day equivalent to the *AVENTURES DE ROBERT MACAIRE*, we should talk about *HIGH NOON*, and even then what a difference in perfection! I know of no work with more integrity than Epstein's *ROBERT MACAIRE*. He harnessed himself to this film in all honesty, he knew his romantics, his boulevard of crime, his Frederick Lemaitre, his Dumas, his

Sand, his Dore. . . By his choice of scenery, by the authenticity of the secondary roles, by the refinement of Mercier's sets, by all sorts of details and even by a certain false naivete, a certain false comedy, he makes us comprehend through his choice of landscape the spirit of an era.

I asked Epstein one day whether it was Mercier or Meerson who placed the chairs and accessories on the summer house set with such finesse. He answered, "The designer doesn't place the chairs; I do. The chairs must be placed in relation to the lens so that nothing is off balance."

Can you imagine a greater professional conscience than that? One more quotation for those who insist on believing that ROBERT MACAIRE was nothing, represented nothing in Epstein's progress. "I was expecting much more of the countryside scenes. I had prepared MAUPRAT entirely differently. I had chosen some magnificent castles whose only fault was that they were located in Alsace. I told myself that no one would never know the difference. I would give them a Berry countryside. But somehow or other A. Antoine learned that I was looking for castles in Alsace to use in Sand's MAUPRAT. He wrote an article about the scandal of the motion pictures that respected nothing. I naturally replied that he was mistaken, that the film would not be made in Alsace, but definitely in the Berry country and that the important thing was to recreate the atmosphere of the Sand novel. It was too late. Madame Aurore Sand insisted so vehemently that I was forced to shoot the whole film in Berry, where I did not find what I was looking for. For instance, the castle of Chateauneuf was a total disappointment, lost in the brush. The ruins of Eguzon didn't come through well either." We can easily imagine Epstein speaking like that about ROBERT MACAIRE, but with the difference that, when he was looking around for a countryside suited to the subject matter, both romantic and classical, one that a Vigny or a Deveria could have loved, he had thought of the Dauphine, had gone there, found exactly what he wanted, and filmed it. That is the difference between ROBERT MACAIRE and MAUPRAT. It is a fact that this film, although lacking the chateaux that would have underscored the atmosphere, contains other beauties, extraordinary minutes of cinematic poetry. An example is the chandelier, which we do not at first recognize, but take for a flower, or a jewel, until the moment when we realize that it is a chandelier. This kind of optical illusion, of metamorphosis that we sometimes encounter in life, is obtained through a simple traveling shot and adept cutting. That is poetry, that is the miracle of Epstein, and only Vigo and Eisenstein in Mexico attempted it. In MAUPRAT the castle in the FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER is already being elaborated. The haunted rooms of the castle in MAUPRAT were designed by Kefer and only the small funds available and the abandonment of the initial plan for the outside shots had removed evidence of the connection linking MAUPRAT to USHER and through MAUPRAT, MACAIRE to USHER. "I told myself there was no way of making commercially successful pictures, so it was just too bad. I left the reins around my neck, that is what made LA GLACE A TROIS FACES, THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER, and FINIS TERRAE."

In 1927 came the unexpected: SIX ET DEMI-ONZE and LA GLACE A TROIS FACES. Everything he had learned began to emerge.

The whole spirit of a period, of a certain society, a certain world with its will to be modern, lived again in these two pictures, to such a point that LA GLACE A TROIS FACES seems at times to be a caricature of a style, of a moment of being when people believed they were modern, when they wanted to be modern at any price.

SIX ET DEMI-ONZE is modern by its title, SIX ET DEMI-ONZE equals a Kodak. If this was still in the same period as DOUBLE AMOUR, "it was still very Pierre Frondaie-ish", said Epstein, by its cinematic conception it belonged entirely to the cycle that was still to come.

Questioning himself about his brother's suicide, a man is reasoning and, going from deduction to deduction, he finds the answers. All this unrolls backwards before us. This is a technique that Feyder was to use again three years later in LE BAISER.

Here already is the attempt at that photogeny of movement, no longer in space, as in his first film in 1923, but in time. SIX ET DEMI-ONZE, therefore begins the "second group, where there is photogeny of movement, studies, presence, groping research, photogeny no longer of movement in space but in time. This variation of the perspective of time exists in LA GLACE A TROIS FACES where there are three different actions seen differently by the same individuals, which intermingle and occur in different rhythms."

We know the story. A man has died. One of his friends has the task of notifying three of his mistresses. They had all confided in him, although keeping back the name of their lover. In this way he learns that it is his friend who is involved. But the picture that he had formed of the lover from the three women's stories is such a different one that he would never have known it was the same person and even less that it was his friend!

LA GLACE A TROIS FACES is therefore a psychological portrait in three panels. The first episode takes place, if I am not mistaken, in high society, the second in a Montparnasse locale, the third in a working girl's apartment. Not only the rhythm contributes to the action. Each of the three episodes is clearly distinguished by means of the style of the scenery, the costumes, the description of a different milieu. Only the features of the leading actor are identical; his behavior, his manner of being and dressing, his expressions are entirely different. The film ends on a description, a showy bit, the celebrated automobile ride, followed by death. No more superpositions, except at the end. No more vagueness, no more anything, apparently the most simplified technique. Everything was in the cutting, or more exactly, in the unfolding and the montage of the story because, from LA BELLE NIVERNAISE on, Epstein no longer wrote his own scenarios. "There are imaginary cuts, like those in LION DES MOGOLS, because we had to cut to please the producer. When I was my own master, there were no cuts. I have never wasted film, but that didn't stop me improvising, an extremely exact improvisation that went on every day between 6:00 and 8:00 P.M. I went to my sets, I sat down, I looked around and I determined all my shots. Improvisation is finished. It is not possible to cut, such a thing is false, abstract, and you never find what you had expected, neither shadows, nor lights, nor people." This may seem improbable since 1930. But neither Feuillade, nor Griffith, nor Eisenstein, nor Feyder, nor Vidor did any differently, nor did Chaplin.

We have not seen LA GLACE A TROIS FACES again for several years. The last time, what was so striking was not so much the cinematic concept as the sharpness with which it described manners. Certain shots of the lady artist walking in the woods with her dog and her fur wrap that matches the dog's hair are close to high caricature. On the other hand, as we saw above, Epstein closely associates his experiments in LA GLACE A TROIS FACES to those of THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER. "In the FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER it is dramatic slow motion: the intensification of the dramatization of the actor's playing through slow motion. There is a seeking after a suggestive interpretation of images."

In the history of French motion pictures USHER was the counterpart of LA PASSION DE JEANNE D'ARC. They were of the same year. They both inspired the same enthusiasm, the same criticism. These two final expressions of the first avant-garde arrived very late, at a time when all young artists were working toward extreme simplicity. Therefore neither JEANNE D'ARC nor USHER could find favor with them. They were too contrived, too manufactured. That is the explanation of why neither of these two films has inspired any imitations. On the other hand, the public, and a large proportion of the critics accepted them without any reservations: they were truly not only the final expression of ten years of research, but their justification. They were simultaneously avant-garde works of an extraordinary technical richness, almost baroque, because they were scientific, works that could never age, faultless, classics. The public was never wrong about them, and the welcome given LA PASSION DE JEANNE D'ARC at the Experimental Cinema and THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER at the reopening of Studio 28 two years ago, confirmed this.

That is what they are today, they will be the same tomorrow, and that is what they were yesterday to their admirers. The few reservations that we might make about their technical bias have already been stated. On the contrary, these two pictures that people criticized because they exploited a formula or, in today's language, for their formalism, breathe the air of life. They are truly cinematic monuments. What difference then whether Epstein adhered strictly to Poe's tale? What difference if *THE HOUSE OF USHER* is an amalgam of the tale of the same name and the *Oval Portrait*? What difference did it make, since after all the spirit of others of Poe's tales is in it, and not because of the story, but because of the internal feeling, the accentuated impressionism of technique and expression. This is the height of symbolism. Obviously it is not *LE CHIEN ANDALOU*. As I said, this film came ten years too late to meet with unanimous approval.

Today there is no mistake, time has restored it to its rightful place. The Festival's large screen conferred incontestable power and authority on its images.

Everything contributes to this masterpiece's unity: the absolute mastery of the editing and the rhythm in which slow motion, superpositions, traveling shots and a mobile camera always meaningfully play their parts. There is not a shot nor a technical operation that does not beautify the film: they are there to impress us in the most noble sense, like the images and cadence of poetry.

The quality of the photography, worthy of the greatest masterpieces of the German film, in which, thanks to orthochromatics, grays are gray, whites are white, and the blacks remarkably velvety.

The lighting, which transfigures the sets, clothes them with a mystery indispensable to the action. If the sets are seen in photographs away from their luminous envelope, the magic of lighting in motion pictures can be understood. They cannot exist without lighting, they were conceived for it and to be photographed.

They are neither realistic nor stylized, but seem unfinished, barely sketched in. The costumes, whose materials were chosen in relation to the lights and the feeling they would project on the screen, never give the impression of theatrical costumes. With them, no actor is disguised. They are at once stylized and real. When necessary they banish the notion of time and yet when necessary they recreate an era. For instance, Lamy's costume: in an ordinary overcoat he seems one of us, he might be any old man of today. As soon as he puts on his great-coat, all of romanticism wells up on the screen.

Instead of being pasted onto the scenery, the actors are one with it. They were selected both for their physiognomy and their acting ability, for their comprehension, for the film's style, not for one second do they strike a false note, and yet their acting is unique. It is not realism nor is it expressionism, it is both at once plus something more subtle, something finer, more economical and at times more hieratical than the acting of the German expressionist actors. They make the dream never realized in *DON JUAN AND FAUST* and *L'INHUMAINE* come true. They possess the rhythm, the acting, the slowness, they have the stops, the violence, the vagueness of the film.

Since the French impressionist school has always considered the cinema to be like a visual symphony, we might call this film by Epstein the cinematic equivalent of Debussy's works.

I know very well that some people will scoff even today. They accept *LE PASSION DE JEANNE D'ARC*, they still do not accept the *FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER* because the latter does not have a religious subject like the former. Of course there is Poe and his *FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER*, Murnau and *NOSFERATU LE VAMPIRE*, Bunuel and *LE CHIEN ANDALOU*. And then what? I have never let myself be imprisoned by formulas. I love Poe and I love Epstein and I know that if Lumiere had invented motion pictures fifty years earlier the whole world would be overcome with admiration for the *FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER* of 1888, which would be called the most perfect example of the symbolist school in films. When will people understand that the cinema is fifty years behind the other arts and that what

corresponds in films to symbolism dates from the Twenties? Moreover, with that typical humor of his, Epstein, as though to mock his critics, turned around, jumped, and scored another point for the films. FINIS TERRAE is LA BELLE NIVERNAISE of THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER. Can one imagine a film more stripped of symbolist garments? Once more Epstein only had to keep to the road which had made money for Studio 28, he would have been sure of victory, and called a genius just as after COEUR FIDÈLE. He only had to choose a tale of Hoffman or Barbey D'Aurevilly to find million-dollar backing. He laughed, turned his back, and went off to Brittany to do what nobody in France had done before.

It is 1928, the cinema is sparkling with uncomparable brilliance. It is the year of King Vidor and von Sternberg, of A GIRL IN EVERY PORT, of L'AUREOLE, THERESE RAQUIN, TROIS PAGES D'UN JOURNAL, of TELLE EST LA VIE, LE VENT, of SYMPHONIE NUPTIALE. But unquestionably it is also the year of the end of silent films. If we could take down the conversations of people of those days and listen to them, we would be astonished at the similarity between what they said and what we hear today.

Every day Hollywood wondered what it had to do in order not to go backwards.

On that horizon appeared a new technique: that of the Russians. They had learned to find new rhythms and principles. They shone with all the splendor of OCTOBER, of THE END OF ST. PETERSBURG.

But behind that splendor there was something else, something more than an epic inspiration, than a renewal of film art through montage: the theory of the non-professional actor. Actually, one person had foreseen that possibility in 1917: Feuillade. VENDEMIARE largely made use of the man in the street. In this Russian theory of the non-professional actor, Epstein who, as we saw above, detested the professional actor, found a spur. This theory was believed to the letter in the West: for instance, people were convinced that Inkijinoff was not an actor! They had not comprehended the subtlety of Soviet technique, which based the film spontaneously on masterly acting by trained interpreters and on acting by people chosen in a crowd. Was Epstein taken in too? He may have been, because FINIS TERRAE is the Russian school in reverse: it has no professional actors at all. The Russian influence is seen in the choice of a deliberately bare subject matter, in the selection of milieu. FINIS TERRAE was filmed from May 1928 to January 1929, there is practically no plot, the story having been taken from the columns of a local newspaper: two friends work together gathering seaweed: they quarrel over a trifle. One of them falls ill and the other puts him in a boat and, in spite of a dead calm, succeeds in catching up with the boat that has already left shore, together with a doctor he has succeeded in finding. It is exactly the opposite of THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER. FINIS TERRAE and L'OR DES MERS constitute a kind of third group. They seek a kind of marvelous that is much more real, undoubtedly under the influence of the Soviet cinema, the first of that kind that had been seen up to then.

There are startling resemblances between FINIS TERRAE and Yannick Bellon's picture GOEMONDS. When we see it again today after MOR'VRAN and others of Epstein's works on Brittany, we cannot help being struck by the fact that the film is dramatic rather than poetic. As a result of Epstein's concentrated effort to succeed in moulding the human element, he did not dominate his subject matter entirely, he is unsure in this film, which at the time gave a tremendous impression of asceticism, an aestheticism of image that disappeared in his subsequent pictures.

On the other hand, never had improvised actors been so perfect. We can feel all the effort and intelligence that Epstein exerted to get the actors used to the camera. "They must not suddenly be put in front of a camera and asked to express despair over their father's death. You must get them used to the camera for several days so that they are no longer conscious of it, so that they walk with you across the Island - anywhere - and when they are in the fields, they act normally. And from that moment on you ask them to make gestures that are

normal and in line with what they might make in daily life and their daily occupations. They will do it without excess, entirely naturally, and with all their little habits and their individuality." We can imagine from this statement of Epstein's all the difficulties and problems that he had. Before him people succeeded in making Polynesians and primitives act. But Epstein was dealing with men who knew what motion pictures were, who realized that they were being called on to act, men whom he was asking not only to fish or to eat in front of a camera, but to pretend to be grieved, to express complex feelings: (Is he or isn't he going to save his friend?) From that aspect *FINIS TERRAE* was a great success, a veritable revelation, in line with the research of the youth of that period. This explains why it had so many imitations.

But Epstein was to express totally and for the first time the marvelous quality that is innate in real things in *MOR'VRAN*. Shot first simultaneously with, then after *FINIS TERRAE*, it is one of the most beautiful documentaries of the French cinema, it is a veritable poem on Brittany and the sea, which preceded by four years *MAN OF ARAN*, some of whose most beautiful passages it inspired. In this film we feel at every moment, although it is not so apparent as in *THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER*, all Epstein's knowledge, all his poetry of the transfiguration of things, and we can understand his having written "The actor that has given me the most pleasure is the Island of Ouessant with all the people on it and all the water."

From then on he was caught, he could not tear himself away from that land and that sea. Undoubtedly in *SA TETE* he gave us some very beautiful pictures of Beauce and the Ile de France, but they were nothing alongside of *MOR'VRAN*. Again he felt master of his material, capable of anything, of realizing, of finishing. He had learned a secret: "In slow motion any scene is good; even a bad actor is good in slow motion." By using slow motion in order to make the gestures of the real characters natural and at the same time to dramatize them, he lessens the difficulty of making actors caught up in life act. "A slow gesture always has more weight, is more thoughtful; we have time and we suppose that the actor himself also has the time to modify his gesture and we think, really if he is spending so much time looking toward that door or reading a letter, there must be something extraordinary about it." This dramatization of slow motion therefore gives the spectator time for reflection and the possibility of putting himself psychologically in the place of the character on the screen. With this secret Epstein succeeded in *L'OR DES MERS*, a magic work bathed in Brittany, and that achieves its fairy quality from the sublimation of the simplest reality. There is no more aestheticism, there is only poetry, and, if there is action, if there is drama, it is not drama, it is a Murnau tragedy. Unfortunately *L'OR DES MERS*, which was filmed without sound, was ruined by a musical accompaniment that was not the one Epstein wanted, and which gave this picture with the symbolist plot a Wagnerian commentary that totally disfigured it.

Two years ago Epstein and I, thanks to the *TEMPESTAIR*'s sound track, wanted to restore this movie as it should be by giving it the sound track it needed. Unfortunately, the Cinematheque did not have the money and, since *L'OR DES MERS*, made as a silent, had been conceived for sound and talking, you must see *LE TEMPESTAIRES* in the state in which it was put by its distributors.

In order to understand that period of Epstein's life, to comprehend its real significance, you must remember that, between 1929 and 1932, motion pictures looked themselves into the studios and began to swaddle themselves in all the prejudices that progressively strangled them. During that period, amid the wind and the rain, in the foggy gray days, Epstein was taking interiors in real scenery. There is not a scene of a film like *LES RAPACES* or certain present-day Italian films that was not made with real interiors. There was no better way of giving the lie to sunshine devotees.

Epstein did not need sets of exaggerated dimensions to give his cameraman scope. Some of the most beautiful images in L'OR DES MERS were shot in the interiors of shanties. He could not have been farther away from the conventional, more non-conformist, or basically, more embarrassing.

L'OR DES MERS is preceded and followed by several short films: those famous filmed songs by Epstein, cinematic poems and among them LE VIEUX CHALAN, in which we find again, at the water's edge, with a greater perfection, the rhythm of LA BELLE NIVERNAISE.

Each of these films constitutes an anthology piece. There are other anthology pieces that move us in L'HOMME A L'HISPANO and LA CHATELAINE DU LIBAN. But it was no longer a time when the public and the critics would single out parts of film for praise. It was a time for dramatic situations, studies of manners, psychology. During his stay in Brittany, Epstein was not aware of the enormous changes that were taking place in Paris. 1932 refused to recognize 1929. Whether or not they liked filmed theater, audiences were entirely imbued with it, and superpositions and visual experiments seemed to them to be the leftovers of out-dated accessories. Add to that the strong current present since 1924 in favor of supremacy of subject matter, and you will understand the silence that greeted the showing of L'HOMME A L'HISPANO and LA CHATELAINE DU LIBAN.

On his return to Paris, Epstein was still one of the great names in French motion pictures. His films were eagerly anticipated. If he had made a MAUPRAT or a ROBERT MACAIRE, he would perhaps have disappointed people, but he would have won out at the commercial level. Because he was still involved in his concessions to 1924, to Pierre Frondaie, to Pierre Benoit, without understanding that these successful authors also belonged to the past, because he did not understand that motion pictures were now in the age of H. Bataille and H. Bernstein, Epstein suddenly found himself alone. He had disappointed everyone.

Perhaps today LA CHATELAINE DU LIBAN or L'HOMME A L'HISPANO might appear to us in a different light. But at the time everyone exclaimed, "Epstein hasn't been able to overcome the difficulties, to break away from silents, hasn't been able to adapt to talking pictures." Perhaps today, seeing these films again, we would learn that Epstein really attacked the problem of making talking pictures with as much courage as J. Renoir. But he went at it the wrong way, against the trend. In 1932-1933 the public was ready to follow any man from the silent movies who fled from speech, who circled round the problem of the talking picture without solving it, whose films were ballets with sleight of hand tricks - like those in which Rene Clair excelled. But no one would have admitted that they could hope to make talking pictures conform to the discoveries or the concepts of the days of the silents, and that there would come a day when the talking film would again need all the research achieved under French impressionism. Is that not the case of LE TEMPESTAIRES? That moment has come and Epstein is again very close to us, but like all pioneers he was not understood; that explains his calvary.

Cut off from the commercial world, with only a few friends, themselves without funds but ready to help him, Epstein lived the agony of all great directors whose ideas are betrayed in their execution for lack of funds. MARIUS ET OLIVE A PARIS, which was as much a failure as L'AFFAIRE EST DANS LE SAC, CIBOULETTE and L'HOTEL DU LIBRE ECHANGE, reduced him definitely to impotence; without even the hope of revenge or rehabilitation by posterity, since this cinematic cock and bull story was completely altered by the producer after its first-night fiasco.

Epstein was able to exist because of his documentaries. Thanks to them little by little he hoped again to be able to make himself listened to, understood. He achieved this aim in 1939; associated with Les Artisans d'Art du Cinema, he might have given us a masterpiece. But then it was war, the occupation, and Vichy's silence. Epstein was reduced to only a brain, a man

reflecting on his art, to which he no longer had the right to devote himself, and to years of retreat into himself from which he emerged stronger than ever and alas more isolated, more unappreciated than ever.

At the time of the Liberation he was forgotten and if it had not been for Constantini's friendship, he would perhaps have remained an unimportant employee of the Red Cross. Such is ingratitude. Such is abominable selfishness, such is unscrupulous ambition on the part of the cinema. They didn't even wish Rene Clair or Renoir to come back, why should they have wanted Epstein? And yet he was going to achieve his last masterpiece, perhaps the greatest, because it is the most masterly, the richest, and the simplest. He was to achieve it amid total indifference, and then to be forgotten.

Today it is impossible to deny the importance of that work, after the showings at the Cannes Festival when so many people of good faith looked dumbfounded at one another wondering why they had never seen *LE TEMPESTAIRE*. What is terrifying is that truly nobody had ever tried to see this movie, and yet Epstein had never disguised the importance he attached to it.

When I put *LE TEMPESTAIRE* on the documentary program of the Museum, everyone threw himself down at my feet begging me take it off out of respect to Epstein's memory and work. Now none of those people who spoke to me had ever seen it, and today all of them are the first to wonder out of what madness they had refused to see it. Let's be frank. It was not madness, they were all victims and Epstein the first, of a conspiracy: a conspiracy of stupidity, ignorance, cinematic illiteracy, prejudices of a business that never looks backward, only ahead. The film was too far above certain heads, too rich for certain brains, too heavy for certain digestions, too pure for certain hearts, and those people, from mouth to ear, aided by imbeciles who wanted to seem intelligent, gave the picture such a bad reputation that all who might have understood it were afraid to see it out of love for Epstein. We approach the burlesque, we are in the flood tide of tragic-comedy, and the day when we can write about the decomposition process, the motives and true causes of the crisis in motion pictures, those pages will attain the highest buffoonery. Delusions of grandeur, love of power, interests where vanity played a larger part than love of money, this was the price of the death of all those creative beings condemned to silence.

LE TEMPESTAIRE, we must recognize, is a film of neither yesterday nor today, What is striking about it is its profound poetry, its human quality, and the exquisite balance of its composition. It is an example of what motion pictures might have been if certain people had not died, if others were not sentenced to silence, if the State were logical with its tradition, and ignored the advice of its experts, accountants, pensionaries, and sycophants, and remembered that the nationalized sector should be well administered by producing profitable works but that also that the profits should be used to help motion pictures go forward.

LE TEMPESTAIRE is a daring work in the sense that it tries not at all to please, and that in it experiments were attempted that have been awaited for more than 20 years, and that were never made although men capable of attempting them exist. It is a curious thing; the more men follow in other men's footsteps, the less they dominate the cinema. The saving grace is that, independently of the cinema, that is of its technique, its business, its ethics, there were, there are, there will always be men of strong personality who will succeed because of their power or originality or the authenticity of their message. But only among the old-timers, can we still find men to dominate the machine and who know how to direct it. Epstein was of that group. The story is well known: when he was making *LE TEMPESTAIRE* in the middle of the storm and the spray, the distraught camera man, clinging to the camera to prevent it from flying away cried, "There won't be anything on the film." "Don't worry about that", said Epstein, "use such and such a lens, open to such and such, do this, do that", and the camera man, on his return to Paris, discovered to his amazement that not only did the film have

impressions, but that the images were marvelously beautiful. Don't fool yourselves, men capable of dominating their profession to such a degree can be counted on one's fingers. The thing that is serious is that none of them has been able to give us the benefit of his knowledge for the past twenty years. Who has asked these scholars of the cinema to do any research? Perhaps it is time to realize that although matter is not to be sacrificed to technique, it might perhaps not be a bad idea, before it is too late, to give all those who, through their experience, can add to the stock of new techniques, some scope for action.

If we do arrive at this, it will be Epstein's last gift to motion pictures, because the technique of sound in slow motion in *LE TEMPESTAIRE* which has not been taken advantage of up to the present time, forces us to make these comments.

So we have a masterpiece that anticipated the future, a man in full possession of his capabilities, younger than many young men and who had just proved it by a remarkable film. That man was left without work for seven years, and without even the excuse that he had been a spendthrift.

But Epstein didn't live in fashionable Passy, he was not a fashionable man. He was too alive to agree to mummify himself and make a usurped reputation last at that price. He died gagged, without being able to express himself, although he had many things to say and to teach us. It will take years to find another Epstein, while others sit in the comfortable seat of their past glory, live and work, are thought geniuses and given millions to make banal works that nobody has the courage to denounce, while people get indignant when Abel Gance, another "living corpse", dares to tell the truth about himself and Epstein.

It is true that we are approaching the hour when that whole world, withered and congealed in the worry palace of the Sleeping Beauty of the movies, is going to crumble before the increasingly aware eyes of the spectators. The sudden realization of Landau, who has just devoted a special number of "Technique Cinematographique" to Gance and Epstein while exclaiming "Mea Culpa", the fact that this ultra-conformist magazine, "Les Cahiers du Cinema", which until today had never deigned to give Epstein, while he was alive, the praise and courage it gave Broughton, has seen fit to ask for this article, are the preliminary signs.

The time has come when people are asking: how is it that this man is working and that man is not?

NOTE: The word "superpositions" mentioned throughout this article was used in the original to denote a particular kind of transition, the best description of which would be somewhere between a dissolve and a long double-exposure.

TRIBUTES TO JEAN EPSTEIN:

On Saturday, April 25, 1953, at 11:00 A.M., in the great hall of the Palais, there took place a moving ceremony of a character entirely different from the usual programs of the Cannes Festival. During this session, organized by the Cinematheque Francaise, the greatest artists of the film industry paid tribute to the man and the artist that was Jean Epstein.

Jean Cocteau:

... From COEUR FIDELE to LES BATISSEURS Jean Epstein set an example of a life which would not be subjected to regulations and which relied only on strength of soul and heart. Jean Epstein's images and rhythm have aged so little that we should like to see rhythm and images of that force and grace at the present time.

A last fraternal greeting to our Epstein and to Langlois, the dragon who guards the treasures. ..

(excerpt)

Abel Gance:

Since many of you came into this room driven by the gentle hand of pity and admiration, let me try to impress indelibly on a virgin portion of your memory, the name of Jean Epstein, not only as one of our great architects of images (my friends will do that better than I) but also and above all as an extraordinary and unrecognized thinker and philosopher.

Very few persons are acquainted with his first book, "La Lyresophie", written when he was 20 and one that Spinoza and Bergson would not have disavowed. For my part I am convinced that this true and singular genius should have worked in the realm of pure thought and abstraction to thrill us. But he was mysteriously caught up in the meshes of the cinema, and in wishing to give a soul to the mechanism, he little by little became mortally wounded by it: a case of the automaton strangling the inventor. Undoubtedly if he had followed the dictates of the inner feelings which, unknown to us, decide our fates, he might have smothered the artist and thinker in him in order to enable the man to live, but he preferred to die as a victim rather than to live by prostituting his art, and to inscribe his name on the Book of Martyrs of our profession alongside Feyder's.

In his books on the cinema, "Bonjour Cinema", "L'Intelligence d'une Machine", "Le Cinema du Diable" and an unpublished manuscript "Alcool et Cinema", books which are far and away the most extraordinary that I know, aside from their quality as literature, Jean Epstein took the cinema apart as the spectroscope does to light, and, like a true sorcerer, he went so far as to penetrate the mysteries of the fringes of interference between images. But, like those stars whose light one perceives only when they have ceased to exist, the radioactivity of Jean Epstein's books will be felt only after many years: I predict that they will serve as bibles to young moviemakers of the future. Jean Epstein was and remains for me, together with Jean Cocteau, one of the most extraordinary intelligences that Providence placed along my path and you can imagine how moved I am to hear the latter speak about the former.

In a little while, the little bands of moving mummies of some of his images will unfold and we will suddenly find ourselves not in the Third Dimension, but, if our hearts are involved, in the Fourth Dimension, abolishing space and time, since Jean Epstein, dead, will be alive at this moment, between you and the film.

Alexander Kamenka:

...Epstein's training was such, his talent was such, that he could not confine his rapid thought to the present: he saw, he created in the future. It was that visionary faculty that was one of the most engaging qualities of Epstein's work, a vision to which he gave an impeccable form, from the technical point of view. I have met few directors who were as perfectly acquainted with the possibilities of the animated image, who knew how to use with such sureness the available technical means enabling us to express ourselves. All his work gives evidence of that perfection which is beyond research, being already a result.

An upright and sincere artist, he had the courage to express himself as he felt he should and as he did in *SIX ET DEMI-ONZE*; *LA GLACE A TROIS FACES*, *THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER*, *LE TEMPESTAIRE*. And he knew how to endow even the purely commercial films like *L'HOMME A L'HISPANO* and *LA CHATELAINE DU LIBAN* with that kind of "beyond" quality that was his own and is certainly the chief characteristic of his talent.

Life's circumstances, commercial necessity, obstacles, and difficulties encountered on his way by an artist whose creative thought is out of the ordinary, did not permit Jean Epstein to give to the French cinema everything that, under more human conditions, a man like him might have given. Unfortunately, his tomb closed before the arrival of a better era in our profession that might have enabled him to continue his creative work freely.

I hope that new generations in the cinema will guard preciously the memory of the great precursor and upright artist who was my friend and companion, Jean Epstein...

(Kamenka is producer for Albatros Films, Paris)

Rene Jeanne:

Jean Epstein has just died. Perhaps this name may not mean a great deal to those who today ask that the screen provide them with the weekly dose of emotion they require. And yet, it is the name of one of the men who have done the most toward making films what they are, that is, a means of expression whose artistic character has finally taken hold.

He was one of those men who have, with the most fervor and the most efficiency, worked for the evolution of this art, and also with the most boldness: at once a good craftsman and a prophet. Doubly a prophet: for, even before coming to a studio, Jean Epstein had placed his pen at the service of the art in which he was to become outstanding, by publishing two volumes in which he showed that there was in him a born poet and a potential film maker.

Jean Epstein succeeded in remaining true to himself, that is, to the man who, as long ago as 1921, had written:

"The film is the most powerful of poetic media,
the most real medium for unreality."

But perhaps, because he believed in this word "poetry", Jean Epstein, the prophet of the cinematographic art, did not enjoy the financially successful career of many hacks of vaudeville or melodrama. May all those who love the true cinema keep the memory of his name and of his faith...

(excerpt)

Marcel L'Herbier:

"For Jean Epstein The Film Was An Instrument of Justice"
Arts, April 1953.

Dear and great Jean Epstein, this evening I see before my sorrowing eyes your lucid writing, your frank signature. There are poignantly contemporary words on this ancient page. Striking as a sign they shed light on you: "Le Cinematographe et la Mort." With this title, the theme which you develop awakens desolate echoes in our friendship:

"Seldom is the meaning of life made clear before death. The transparencies of the Film do not go as directly to the furthest reaches of the soul as do those of death. But they approach it in the twilight, in the tepidness of life. This photographing of the depths sees the angel in man like a butterfly in its chrysalis. Death makes promises to us through the film."

And again it was your hand that set down this grave statement which, tonight, burdens the heart: "Like death, the film -- and otherwise it would hardly exist -- is an instrument of justice."

If, poet of Silence, it was such for you only in the world of thought or in the world of dreams, at least take with you into the imageless and voiceless kingdom the idea that our fraternal admiration, armed by your example, tomorrow and to the limit of our strength, will struggle to bring the film to dispense in a fuller measure that justice which it has not deigned to give you.

(excerpt)

Catherine Wuenscher:

Sight and Sound

October-December, 1953

Being about the same age as the sound film myself, I am one of the generation that was astonished when the characters in MODERN TIMES didn't talk. Of course, since that time, I have seen POTEMKIN, CALIGARI, LA CHARRETTE FANTOME, THE KID, GREED, METROPOLIS, CHATEAU DE PAILLE D'ITALIE, etc., but I have never been as fascinated by silent images as I was by Jean Epstein's, whose shadows have outlived him. Again, I had never before realized how much the screen lost when it was allowed to talk. Living in a white frame, Epstein's phantoms take on an independent existence, a true gift of mystery and enchantment.

After having seen for the first time, at the rate of three a day, most of Jean Epstein's films, my judgment is somewhat paralysed. What can one say, except that they are beautiful, with the incontestable beauty of masterworks? Epstein gave me something I had been vainly searching for in contemporary production (and failed to find, except in Renoir and Ford): a purely cinematic emotion, a beauty based uniquely on the rhythm and the plastic perfection of moving images.

While these memories are still fresh, I must try to analyse something of what I found.

Up to THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER (1928), Epstein's films seem curiously "demode". Certainly, there are some remarkable moments, -- the night sequence and the execution in L'AUBERGE ROUGE (1923), the two lovers meeting by the water's edge and the country fair in COEUR FIDELE (1923); the automobile death race in LA GLACE A TROIS FACES (1927); but the "modernistic" and historical styles of decor appear restrictive now. When one remembers that he made these films between the ages of 25 and 29, (he was born in Warsaw, of a French father, in 1897), one is inclined to reconsider the verdict; yet the general idea persists.

THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER stands a little apart from the rest of his work. The film contains some unforgettable imagery: the vistas of corridors

with a wind sweeping down them, the bizarre hangings, guttering candles, the supernatural features of Madame Gance, and the splendid, marvellous, strange and too brief sequence of the burial, in which four men, walking through a landscape stripped bare by autumn, carry a white coffin behind which floats a long white veil. Edgar Allan Poe was not betrayed.

But the real revelation comes with *FINIS TERRAE* (1929), and continues up to *LE TEMPESTAIRE* (1947), films with a love and understanding of the sea, of Brittany, and of simple, noble, hard-pressed people. Before writing of Rossellini, and the birth of neo-realism, critics should look at these films by Epstein. All the beauty of the austere images in the final scene in *Paisa* is already there in 1929, in Epstein's figures stretched out on a white sandy beach, scarcely distinguishable from the surrounding rocks.

The actors in these films are not only Bretons and thick-set Breton women, always in mourning for a loved one; they are, too, the unceasing wind, blowing salt water spray along with itself, flattening the drenched manes of horses, swallowing up candle flames, eddying peasant women's skirts already soaked by the rain and the sea, fluttering black sails against a grey sky; the wind that twists round trees, bends flimsy grasses, sharpens the sound of horses galloping on the little island of Bannec; and above all the sea, that Epstein never tires of photographing - calm, crowned with circlets of foam, swelling, breaking ceaselessly on the rocks, sending up its immaculate foam to fall again, slowly, on succeeding waves; the sea of great storms, sometimes throwing up an oar, sometimes a body, sometimes a necklace, sometimes a mysterious casket, containing perhaps *L'OR DES MERS*: the sea by which these people are obliged to live, and by which they are punished. Unlike the Flaherty of *MAN OF ARAN*, Epstein does not describe exceptional circumstances, but a people whom he watched living day by day, his eyes opened wide by love. Sometimes, unconsciously, one licks one's lips, astonished, not to find the taste of salt on them.

Epstein's films are slow; when their narrative finally reaches its end, it seems to be because life has brought it there. He is never chary of lingering over a detail - on the contrary, his stories are often composed only of details, integrated into a complete fresco. He will dwell on the limbs, the walk of a character if the motion fascinates him, on shrivelled hands, a handkerchief being dropped, a single face. He will contemplate a pool of water with the rain driving into it (*L'AUBERGE ROUGE*), a face reflected in a tarnished mirror (*COEUR FIDELE*), a bleeding hand (*FINIS TERRAE*), faces that exchange long and slow glances, or an Ile de France landscape; or, simply, the sea whose last secret he seems determined to prise out.

His characters are never in a hurry. They live their daily life under our eyes, performing the innumerable everyday acts and gestures that make up their "plot"; but one doesn't for a moment linger for the feverish rhythm of most of today's pictures, in which nothing is allowed unless it advances the action; the montage of Epstein's films gives them a rhythm which is like the rhythm of breathing.

The term "magician of the screen" has been used, and abused. Jean Epstein is one of the few who perhaps deserve it. The little girl in love in *COEUR FIDELE*, and her crippled friend, Lady Usher, the Breton fishermen and their families, the passionate poetic images of men and nature, these will live with the breath of love Jean Epstein gave them.

Hans Richter:

(Letter to the Group for Film Study)

I hear with the greatest interest that you are planning a memorial program in your Group for Film Study about Jean Epstein. I think that it is high time that the American audience knew a little more about the important French pioneer.

I remember with great respect his contribution to the theory and aesthetic of the film, in continuing the research of Canudo and Delluc in France. As far as I know, there is no other country in the world which has contributed to the film aesthetic as much as this group of French film writers and directors. Epstein's films have influenced the European tradition considerably, especially all his friends and colleagues in the twenties. . . .

I can't say that I like all of his films or everything that he made, but my respect for what he tried to achieve and the great aims he put up for himself and for all of us, will never cease. His student and assistant, Luis Bunuel, gave him credit for his talents as well as for his integrity.

To honor his memory is to honor the great but forgotten aims of the advanced film artist of the twenties.

PROGRAM NOTES

This booklet, issued on the occasion of the first comprehensive presentation of the work of Jean Epstein in America, contains no program notes in the usual sense. The editors have tried, rather, to present a picture of Epstein the man and the artist as a whole.

His life's work can be divided approximately into three periods, and films for this presentation have been chosen to represent these periods. The descriptions and significance of these films have been outlined elsewhere in this brochure. Credits will be found in the filmography beginning on page 46. The excerpts below are from contemporary criticism at the time of release.

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|--------------------------------|--|
| I. 1922 - 1927 BEGINNINGS | The most representative for this period is the "county fair" sequence from COEUR FIDELE |
| II. 1928 - 1929 MATURITY | The burial sequence from HOUSE OF USHER |
| III. 1930 - 1935 "LES MARINES" | The extraordinary "seascapes" best express this period. FINIS TERRAE is shown in its entirety, and an excerpt from LE TEMPESTAIRES |

PERIOD I (COEUR FIDELE)

excerpts from contemporary criticism

Rene Clair:

(1924)

Before formulating any criticism at all, let us first say that every person wishing to become acquainted with the resources of present-day motion pictures must see COEUR FIDELE.

What distinguishes COEUR FIDELE from so many other movies is the fact that it was composed for the screen, for the delight of intelligent "eyes", so to speak. Right from the first few shots, it expresses a feeling for the film, no doubt thought-out rather than instinctive. The lens leans on all sides, turns about things and people, seeks an expressive shot, an unexpected angle of vision. This deliberate search for the many and various aspects of the world is fascinating: we cannot conceive how so many film makers restrict themselves to an ever-

increasing use of masking and trick photography when they could just as well, with a simple tilting of their cameras, evoke so much curiosity.

Mr. Jean Epstein, the director of COEUR FIDELE, is visibly preoccupied with the question of rhythm. Much has been said about cinematic rhythm, and the question seems to be the most important one that motion pictures have to answer at the present time. . . .
(excerpt, written in 1924)

Emile Vuillermoz:

Le Temps, Paris, 1923

This week I saw Jean Epstein's famous COEUR FIDELE, a film which gave rise to impassioned discussions in the theatres while it was being shown. This work is not understood, and it is not difficult to guess why. But if there were a theatre manager in Paris who, in the field of motion pictures, was ready to offer spectacles corresponding to our symphonic concerts, what marvelous programs he could arrange with reels chosen from the work of Gance and L'Herbier! I would advise him to project immediately on the screen the tremendous carnival scene from Epstein's film. Here is a moment of beauty and modern vertigo of unforgettable taste and of breathtaking power. This vision is sufficient unto itself. Many of our directors' new discoveries are of the same order. "Cinematographic Art" would find it of the highest interest to present in this fashion, from time to time, these 'choice selections'. This would be its most useful means of popularization and its most effective propaganda.
(excerpt)

Georges Bourgeois:

Sept Arts, Bruxelles, 1923

The extraordinary carnival poem also should be seen. It contains a rhythm such as is rarely found. Mr. Jean Epstein gives an insight into the carnival, which is, for me, one of the most intense of all film creations, through remarkably deft handling of composition, choice of typical detail, the arrangement of these graphic details, their juxtaposition, their expressive blending. We are not just seeing a carnival scene on the screen; we are a part of it. We are part of the whirling arms of the merry-go-round, the giddiness of the inclined planes, the ground which sinks while the seat simply tips over, the meteoric flight of the outside world, seen as light and dark blurs; whites and blacks form intoxicating gusts. At this point, subtitles are no longer needed. We actually live the movement of the carousel, we spin on it with the characters in the film.

And all these things, carousels, heads of wooden horses, drunken horizons, are focused, made meaningful and dramatic, through the most consistent and effective artistic care. This film of Jean Epstein's is of the highest interest. It reveals a technical knowledge which is resolutely oriented towards stylization, not by trompe-l'oeil, but by giving new value to reality; it is a duel between the lens and the image to be captured in all its expressive power.

(excerpt)

Rene Jeanne:

Petit Journal, Paris, 1926

Disdaining facile adaptations, Jean Epstein in COEUR FIDELE wished to be his own script writer, and, like all true artists, attached more importance to form than content; thus he chose the simplest subject that could be imagined... This action Jean Epstein expressed by purely cinematographic means, and there is, in the dream of his characters at the seashore, a so perfect

comprehension of what the cinema can and should be, that one has the impression of finding oneself abruptly facing truth ...
(excerpt)

What Jean Epstein said about COEUR FIDELE, one evening in January 1925, while presenting his film personally in a theatre outside of Paris:

Radio Talk: Roger Regent. (July)

(Indented passages in this article are quotations from Jean Epstein)

"COEUR FIDELE, of all my films, is my favorite, at least this evening in 1925 ... However, you cannot gauge, on the basis of this film, what I am capable of doing: you can only judge - or rather, anticipate what I shall be able to do once I have at my disposal the necessary...funds; no one, these days, is naive enough to believe that the necessary means, with unlimited credit, are at our disposal..." With respect to the time element, I had to write the script for COEUR FIDELE in one night, from six o'clock in the evening to eight in the morning, and this is strictly between us..."

Let me add a note at this point: Jean Epstein wrote the script for COEUR FIDELE within a few hours, that is possible...But for months and months before that, he had already been saying...:

"What I want is a drama set in a merry-go-round. The tragic element, thus focused, would multiply tenfold the pictorial effect by adding to it that of giddiness and whirling..."

Thus, he was able to set down in one night what had occupied his thoughts for so long -- what he already knew by heart and would finally be able to express.

"It would be difficult for me to express to you all of the misgivings with which we directors, concerned as we are with the moral quality of our production, must work. Altogether by chance, altogether through perseverance and patience, guile, single-mindedness, we manage to slip into our films only a few of those elements of which we should like our films to be entirely woven. That is why I should like to have you believe that COEUR FIDELE is still not the film in which I was able to bring forth all my ideas, all my hopes, all my faith in the cinema..."

Few films have enjoyed, from the first time they were shown, such heated and varied press comments. It was acclaimed and booed; it provoked an enthusiastic response on the part of some and indignation on the part of others. It had its first public showing along the Boulevards in a theatre which no longer exists today. It should be noted that, for the first time, a movie camera had been placed, not IN FRONT of a merry-go-round, but ON the merry-go-round itself, and revolved with it. Jean Epstein thus used to recall this tumultuous scene:

"People were not used to this mobility. They were not able to understand it. Some people were saying that it made them ill. The gentleman next to me changed his seat. He thought that his seat was responsible for his discomfort. He went three seats further down, one row closer to the screen. Then, the theatre manager said to me: "Is there going to be much more of this merry-go-round sort of thing?... Because if there is, I'm going to have to call the police" - and at the end of the second day, he stopped showing the film..."

Since then, this film has continued to be one of the great classics of the cinema, and, like all classics, has given rise to the most diverse views. Here is Jean Epstein's own estimate of it in 1927:

"The last time I spoke with the poet Canudo, a few days before his death, and while we were organizing together the Salon d'Automne showings, he sought to classify films according to genre, and placed COEUR FIDELE within realism. Since then, I have heard this erroneous conception expressed a few times: that COEUR FIDELE is a realist film.

"No, this I cannot concede. If I had to select the genre to which COEUR FIDELE belongs, I would think of Romanticism, of Symbolism, and I would long hesitate before making a decision. This melodrama is so symbolistic that the woman did not really have to be called Marie; the woman might simply be called The Woman. Petit Paul represents the evil force in man, brutal desire, human and animal, drunken and impassioned like Dionysius. Jean is love, pure and noble, moral force, superior to brute force, and of olympian serenity...

"So far as symbols are concerned, the film is full of them. This merry-go-round, this carnival, cannot they be the image of life? And when, at the drama's conclusion, you see Jean and Marie return to the noisy fairgrounds, this sequence has for me but one meaning: that of a return to life."

Editor's note:

Just before going to press, we received from Paris the announcement from Editions Jeheber, of the forthcoming publication of Jean Epstein's posthumous book, ESPRIT DE CINEMA. The book is divided into three parts: Causes and Effects, Avant-Garde and Rear-Garde, and Art and Technique. For additional details contact the Group for Film Study.

PERIOD II. (THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER)

Excerpts from contemporary criticism

A.F.:

Cinema, 1929

If there are states of mind, spiritual stirrings and mystical atmospheres which the screen can express more vividly and creatively than by written words, they are surely those painted with such an eerie and expressive texture by Jean Epstein in this haunting re-creation of the celebrated story by Edgar Allan Poe. For he has transmuted the broody spirit and, with but a minor deviation, the letter of that weird tale, into a canvas of absorbing fantasy and no small visual beauty. Where Poe's prose has done its work with the literalness of words, Epstein has patterned his picture with sodden mist-heavy landscapes, with strange wafting movements, with inexplicable adventure, and strangely sentient humanity...

It is a sombre study, this story of the Ushers and their tragic heritage of the maddened Roderick and the wife, (Poe made Madeleine a sister), from whom he tore the very life he instilled into his painting of her, and Epstein's film is perhaps even more successfully sombre than the original. But he has exercised such ingenious camera craft, he has expressed the inexpressible in such strange movements and symbols, and he has combined the fantastic in setting with the fantastic in humanity, that it must be admitted he has in many ways gone further than the power of the story. As such it is scarcely fare for the conventional film fan, but for all who have faith in the expressiveness of the cinema, for all who care for its fantasy and its art, THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER is an offering the rarity of which should make it valuable.

Anonymous

London "Times", 1929:

THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER, taken from the work by Edgar Allan Poe, by its technical adroitness and all the artifices it contains, is to be found at the opposite cinematographic pole from FINIS TERRAE. The scenes are prolonged with heavy anguish. The rhythm is grave, the acting is stylized. The fatal destiny that menaces the House is freed by immense panoramic shots in which microstopic characters move about. The lighting and the composition of the shots are full, are filled with the fantastic and the symbolistic. The atmosphere is achieved in the style of a tour de force..."

Claude Mauriac:

Figaro Littéraire, Paris, 1954

I am indebted (to television) for the showing of the abridged version of THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER, (Jean Epstein, 1927), in which expressionism does not distort a most secret discipline, which is that of masterpieces.

(excerpt)

Jean Epstein:

THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER:
Some Notes On Edgar Allen Poe
And Images Endowed With Life.

La Critique Cinematographique, March 1928.

Formerly we used to visit, at the studio on the Rue du Bois*, a terrifying machine, two stories high, as big as an apartment, that an innovator, at that time, had conceived in order to assure the vanishing of ethereal characters. When the construction was completed, there was a scandal when we saw that simple movements of the diaphragm were better than so many pullies and gears.

In producing a film from Poe, the first step is to create an immense and personal technique. When the technique is complete, and the images that we try to guide are in hand, we see (for Poe as well as for anyone else) that the technique today can reside almost uniquely in the interrelationship of the images. The photography that we boast of becomes the enemy of the film. It would be unheard of for a writer to sacrifice his style to calligraphy. Yet today the loyal avant-garde is still making this sacrifice. The writing for a Poe film must of necessity be very simple. Poe himself wrote: "...There exist, without any possible doubt, very simple and natural combinations of objects that contain the power to move us..."

But what objects are simple? Above all not the macabre. Horror in Poe, is more the result of the living than the dead and death itself has a sort of charm. Life also has a sort of charm. Life and death are made of the same substance, of the same fragile nature. As life is broken all of a sudden, so is death undone. All these dead are only slightly dead. Madeline and Roderick feel that they are going to die, just as we feel sleep overcome us. Roderick lies in wait for the sounds at the threshold of the tomb as we lie in wait at the door of a room for a tired nocturnal guest to wake. Mystery is there, where an equilibrium is reached in which a soul is now shown in life and now in death. We think of the periodic tables that are found in chemistry. THE HOUSE OF USHER passes into its ashen light. There is nothing of the horrible there.

And what is there of the morbid? Is it this knowledge of death that we would wish true? Or is it this profound view, this unbridled sensitivity, like that of the medium and of the poet, the mother for her son, one lover for another, this transparency from the tombs? And was Novalis, who died from having wished to die, also mad?

* One of the oldest studios, that of Pathe Frères at Vincennes, today has been replaced by the Pathe-Kodak factories.

PERIOD III.

"LES MARINES" ("The Seascapes")

1929: FINIS TERRAE

Epstein's own comments and excerpts from contemporary criticism

Jean Epstein:

THE APPROACHES TO TRUTH

(An Article on the production of
FINIS TERRAE, which appeared in
"Photo-Cine", November-December,
1928, Paris.)

One windy day, beyond the extreme tip of the Brittany peninsula, I saw a pair of carrier pigeons coming in over the ocean. Describing two wide circles, the birds recognized the island, the land! The irregular beating of their wings gave evidence of their fatigue. They disappeared to the east. Sailors who, each day, err in their wanderings, regard these aerial navigators with religious wonder.

I have long observed Spat* while he was drawing. The point of his pencil is magnetic like a bird. Without a doubt, the stroke, like a flight, is headed for only one goal. Spat's pencil leaves and arrives; its road is his drawing. But I do not believe that half-way along the road either Spat or the pigeon knows precisely where he is going, or how he is going; what they do know is that they have the ability to get there.

The path of a film is like the flight of a bird, like a drawing by Spat. It is sure and unknown. The pilot is certain of it; yet he is neither certain of the end, nor of the means; he is certain as is the insect, as is the bee feeding its queen, as is the ant building its anthill. This certainty is what determines the course of the film. It can be neither explained nor imparted. The pilot stands alone, no one can help him. The best advice makes for the worst mistakes. Very late in the course of a film, we finally catch a glimpse of its definitive character. This character is so unforeseen that each film appears as a new person, brought into being spontaneously.

Since the scenes of wonderland which men of science bring forth to us, from the extremely large, to the extremely small, are limited by the instruments, so is the dramatic conviction limited by material and technical imperfections. Most films are imaginative conceptions which the author seeks to make appear real. Giving to an idea more and more exactly the appearance of an outward fact, such is the cinema's progress. Without the sound film, the color film and the three-dimensional film, this progress would have been halted. Meanwhile, I have sought to obtain the dramatic illusion by proceeding, in some fashion, against the grain, by bestowing upon an existing reality the more general characteristics of fiction. I sought to make truth appear fictional.

And, guided by forces no longer known to me, I went to Brittany to seek the authentic elements of the film which became FINIS TERRAE. This does not mean that a place may indifferently be the land of a love, of a war, of a miracle. There is always a secret relationship between the traveler and the land where, apparently, he chooses to stop. Concarneau, Audierne and Douarnenez appear Italian. The Pointe du Raz is inhabited by a beggar people. Sein has given up its handsomest maidens to the taverns of Brest. I return astonished, like a sorcerer empty-handed for the first time, not wishing to confide in anyone.

*c Spat is one of France's best-known sculptors; he made a bas-relief of Epstein.

Yet there is a mystery in this Far West. By what means does a thousand-man community live from birth until death on an islet of less than one-fifth of a square mile, and with rain as its only source of water, uncultivated, at the mercy of constant winter storms? What stricture weighs upon them, that they cannot take part in the civilization of the mainland? Why do they prefer risking scarcity of food to a crossing which takes but a few hours? The men-folk are sailors or fishermen; but the women are afraid of the sea and become ill as soon as they embark. A wife for twenty eight years had managed to live with her husband, a sailor, for a total of seven months. She kept house, on the island, and brought up two sons for a fate similar to that of their father. Another of them had never set foot on the mainland, does not know its various animals. When she sees a horse on a postcard, she says, "It's a large pig." The inhabitants of Sein and Ouessant, furthermore, are unlike the Bretons of the mainland. Their type recalls the East. They prefer by far to marry among their own group. One would take them for some very old colonies of mariners whose origin is shrouded in mystery.

Therefore, I had not looked carefully. It wasn't that there was nothing to see. Distrustful, I took along on my second journey the seven eyes of a camera. This perseverance had its reward in the discovery of the two islets of Bannec and Balanec, behind their cloud of seaweed, and of this fraternal colony of the seaweed fishermen, these "reapers of the sea". There, among them, is summarized this mystery of these men dedicated to a land that is mere rock, to a sea which is but foam, to a hard and perilous endeavor, thus following a high calling.

An irresistible persuasive force pours forth from the moving picture when the latter has the ring of sincerity. The cinematography of an object which plays a role in a drama is always convincing. An object does not lie. The actor's craft, on the contrary, only too often, and necessarily, is a school for lies. Sincere expressions, natural gestures, had to be and still are avoided, analysed into their component parts, extended in time, "held", formalized, because they are too rapid, undiscernible, at the rate of ordinary shooting and projection, and only shooting thirty to forty frames per second allows one to avoid this first false feature of the actor's performance.

Makeup, on the other hand, seriously compromises the truthfulness of an expression. As rare as it is to see a single film produced in which actors wear no makeup, we cannot help smiling when we notice the extraordinary deformation of a face, the paralysis of its finest and most mobile features, under a mask of grease-paint.

No set, no costume can have the aspect, the cast of truth. No professional faking can produce the admirable technical gestures of a topman or a fisherman. A smile of kindness, a cry of rage, are as difficult to imitate as a rainbow in the sky, or as the turbulent Ocean.

FINIS TERRAE seeks to be psychological "documentary", the reproduction of a brief drama composed of episodes which have taken place, of authentic men and things. Leaving the archipelago of Ouessant, I had the impression that I was carrying away with me not a film, but a fact; and that once this fact had been transported to Paris, something would henceforth be lacking from the material and spiritual life of the islands. It is the work of a sorcerer.

Anonymous

The London "Times":

FINIS TERRAE is not an adaptation from fiction. The story is the film itself, taken direct from the lives of the fisher-folk at Finisterre and set in the actual surroundings in which the event described took place. M. Epstein declares in effect that he has merely exercised his selective gift in the choice and arrangement of incident and his cunning in the matters of lighting and composition leaving the rest to his characters and the elemental scene which

surrounds them. There is much in the film to sustain this impression and to prove, as the Russians have done, how admirable an actor he can be who has never really acted in his life. The two young fishermen of Ushant, that tempest-ridden island off the coast of Brittany, have very little grace, physical charm, or gift of expression to aid them, but we get to know them thoroughly because of the economy with which the story is told, leaving the camera free to concentrate on the development of character. M. Epstein observes his characters as the sea and rocks might be said to observe them - with an almost hostile detachment. The film is conspicuous for its "close-ups" and detail shots, -The moving and the motionless in magnified opposition- and is deliberately conscious of fate working itself out of trifles.

Anonymous

"Film Weekly", New York:

FINIS TERRAE is the work of Jean Epstein. He treats simply but psychologically a dramatic situation that actually existed, the players being the very people who experienced the episode. The locale of the action is an island off Cap Finisterre, a district famous for its rugged beauty. Besides its deep penetration of emotions, the film is remarkable for its photography, which seizes upon the natural beauty of the countryside, and with it creates compositions of light and shade of both aesthetic and dramatic significance.

Anonymous

Cinemonde, 1933:

Jean Epstein, who, better than anyone else, knows the value of technique and possesses every secret of the most complex types of shooting, nevertheless knows how to discipline himself and put a check on his virtuosity in order to give mature films of a crushing and beautiful simplicity. This man, who gave us the pathos of FINIS TERRAE, a drama of the sea, has again given us a film of pathos, worthy of the most beautiful songs which the tragedy of the Brittany shores has inspired ... L'OR DES MERS is a beautiful and a great film, of a soberness worthy of its awe-inspiring setting.

(Note: L'OR DE MER, "The Gold of the Sea", another film from the period of FINIS TERRAE, will be shown by the Group for Film Study as part of their forthcoming 1955 series.)

1947: LE TEMPESTAIRES

(see "Sound in Slow Motion", page 44)

Excerpts from contemporary criticism

Charles Ford:

V, May, 1947

...With LE TEMPESTAIRES, the new film by Jean Epstein, we make a truly regenerating ablution. This is only a second-feature film, but it is a work of the first magnitude...

Anonymous

Le Film Francais, May 5, 1947:

In this film, for the first time, slowed-down sound is used which allows the increase and decrease of sound to be appreciated, and whose every nuance is reconstituted. Certain scenes have great beauty...The film is a sort of poem of water, of earth, and of wind...

Anonymous

Le Film Francais, May 5, 1947:

It's tremendous! It seems as though sound perspective were being revealed to us for the first time.

Rene Jeanne:

Cinemonde, June 8, 1947

By a concern for truth, which its author has respected, and especially by the way in which, as far as acting is concerned, it derives from the grimmest of the followers of realism, LE TEMPESTAIRE is a realistic film. But there is realism and realism; Jean Epstein's is very personal, since, while rigorously excluding from his film everything which does not exist in the most ordinary of everyday life, he knows how to cause a lyricism, which transfigures images, to flow beneath each one of the gestures which make up this life. It is poetic realism.

J.B. Jeener:

Le Figaro, January 24, 1947

In LE TEMPESTAIRE you hear, for the first time, a direct recording of the wind...The result is gripping. The Dantesque dialogue of the wind, of the sea, and of the rocks resembles nothing else.

Paris-Cinema, January 28, 1947

It is a film of nowhere and everywhere...It is essentially a film of the sea...

The foregoing excerpts from contemporary criticism concerning the various periods in Epstein's creative career, as well as the quotations from his sayings, were assembled for this booklet by Mlle. Marie Epstein.

ARTICLES BY JEAN EPSTEIN:

SUPERNATURAL REALITY

(Taken from the book, by J.E.,
 "Le Cinema du Diable", 1947)

..On the other hand, the end of a gesture represented in slow motion is awaited for a long time by the spectator, who, during all this time, considers, more than he usually does, the possible motives and the consequences of that gesture, while dramatizing it with a whole field of hypotheses. In order to obtain that effect of the psychological enrichment of the movements of a character, a slight slow motion is enough, not evident in itself, but only by that slight fever of interpretation, which requires time to produce.

A man lifts his attention, from the book he is reading, in the direction of the lens, that is to say, toward a door which is out of the picture and through which someone must enter. In some scenes and in a montage at normal speed, as soon as the attention of the first character leaves the book, the spectator sees the other area: the door that opens and gives passage to the second character. There is no time for any doubt, any question; all is simple, immediate, logical, clear and of ordinary interest. But, in slow motion, the lifting of the attention of the reader lasts several seconds, during which time the spectator doesn't know and wonders who is going to enter, as the character on the screen seems to be wondering: a friend or an enemy, a bringer of good or of bad tidings, a person of no particular importance, or a stranger? Thus has been created an expectation, an enigma, a dramatic suspense.

That surrealistic state which tends toward the dramatic in the performance of the actors, by careful use of slow motion, can and should be used as a common directing procedure, notably in poetic films or in films of fantasy; also, in those films, now numerous, that utilize non-professional actors, who for the most part by nature have the tendency to move too quickly and don't know how to slow down and break down their pantomime in order to make it better understood, or, if they try, do it clumsily, endangering their true-to-life quality.

As with images, there exists a surrealism of cinematographic sounds, but we are just beginning to discover it, to dare use it. The cries of conscience, the oburgations of duty, the obsessive reproaches of remorse, the same familiar stories that come to mind, the secret tones of dreams, the tumult of the nightmare, all these the sound track attempts to convey.

But also, in that domain, the search was begun, from the inception of the sound film, in a false direction, and, until a very recent date, has remained almost completely dedicated to perfecting the reproduction of artificial noises, slavish imitations of the most banal aural stimuli, of a whole series of second-hand imitations of a faked din. We haven't concerned ourselves with learning how the microphone, the film, the loudspeaker could, themselves, by virtue of their own nature and their own operation, interpret the real noise of a real wind, the real gallop of a real horse. And then, when by pure chance, such an experiment took place, we had the naïvete to become angry that the resulting sound was not identical to the most ordinary impressions received by the ear. Because, that which the sound engineers, the producers, the directors and the public wanted was to hear again for the thousand-and-first time, the wind and the gallop, exactly as they had heard them a thousand times with the naked ear. What did it matter, then, if it was necessary to contrive a false wind or a false gallop with bellows and whistles, pipes, combs wrapped with tissue paper, or with half-shells of nuts with rubber suction cups, or teaspoons, provided that these seemed closer to reality, to the standard of human hearing!

This heresy — like wanting to prevent the spyglass from spying and the magnifying glass from magnifying — hasn't been stamped out yet, but, at any rate, there is, in opposition to it, the orthodox tendency which seeks to become familiar with and to record the original sound representation which the motion picture camera can record based on natural noises. The whole point is, for the sound as well as the image, to give freedom, as far as possible, or to stimulate and to realize the automatic and authentically surrealizing function peculiar to the film. It is a question of finding the uses for these recordings which the partisans of flat sound so dislike, and to cultivate their seeming defects; the deformations due to resonance, variations of distance, deflections of echoes, surrounding interference, distortions and tone-color variations, murmurs and cries never before heard and like nothing else, acoustic forms whose existence only the microphone can reveal as its personal creation.

It is true that, in general, at the present level of technical development, the results of sound recording are still less certain, less finely appreciable, than those of optical recording. Furthermore, the public remains indifferent, as though it were deaf, to the language of sounds, and only has a sense of hearing which is truly exercised and attentive for catching words, even to the point of being unable to be satisfied with vocal music, requiring that each word of a song be distinctly audible. In fine, the audible universe, since it is less rich in various attributes than the visible universe, offers less opportunities for development and less of a grasp for interpretive apparatus.

Within the relative poverty of the sound-making elements, the production of slowed-down sound, with its surrealizing force similar to that of slow motion, takes on a considerable importance. By drawing out the duration of a sound, the act of slowing down augments the distinguishing power of the sense of hearing, which acquires the ability to analyse more accurately the complex of sounds, to distinguish within it factors which otherwise are imperceptible, to discover their timbres which, until then, were literally unheard of. Thus, by means of audio-magnification, cinematographic rendition creates sounds, and true sounds; these are as true, as surrealized as the pictures of a nebula, an infusorian, or a skeleton created by means of telescopic, microscopy, or radioscopy. That which for the human ear is only the monotonous and confused roar of the sea during a storm, the slowed-down re-recording makes us hear as a polyphony of sounds which are so strange, so new, that many of them still have no name in any language. With each passing second, the sea utters another cry.

Furthermore, this sort of sound close-up, by slowing down the frequency of vibrations, makes the pitch lower. When stretched to twice its original duration, each sound is lowered one octave. Therefore, the same sound can be re-registered several octaves, or fractions of octaves lower, in the same way that it can be re-registered for a more or less accelerated projection which raises the pitch. Thus, with a point of departure an actual environment adequately interpreted, elements of sound are integrated which may serve to compose a succession of consonances or dissonances, a score, a symphonic or cacophonous music, of sounds truer than nature provides.

THE REALITY OF FAIRYLAND

(Chapter taken from "Esprit du Cinema", a posthumous manuscript, to be published by the Editions Jeheber in Paris, in March of 1955.)

That sparse and clear forest of Paimpont, which once was Broceliande, now appears to the traveler as long since stunted and depopulated by another panic cry: 'Great Merlin is dead'. Melusine and so many other fairies have disappeared from the woods and ponds, abandoning the old deserted castles and the hills consecrated to the wind. Today, the screen remains the only place where some one of these marvellous persons may be glimpsed. The film has become the best refuge of a certain fairyland, the last preserve of a certain tradition of the prodigious. Within this domain -- without even mentioning the absolute freedom of the animated cartoon -- nothing is impossible for the film. Trick photography can do everything: change pumpkins into coaches, divide the waters of the sea, make magic carpets fly, compel John the Baptist, once he has been beheaded, to carry his own head to Herod.

However, we must recognize that, even if these contrived miracles still amuse many people, they no longer convince anyone. The spread of this lack of faith will perhaps go so far as to compromise the success of another aspect of the marvellous of a scientific appearance. Created with the same ease, would a journey to a nebula or a war of robots still have the power to astonish us? Soon, all this photo-chemical machinery, cooked up in the shooting laboratories, will appear as dated as the weighty apparatus of pulleys, cranks and gears which Melies was wont to make use of in order to have a demon come forth or disappear in the scenery, before anyone was aware that it was merely due to the clâsing of a trap-door, sprung by a simple motion of the thumb, in order to obtain the same effect which, in this manner, ceased to appear so astounding.

It is not only that the technical processes, necessary to classical magic according to Perrault or to modern magic according to Wells, are henceforth debunked, having become too obviously false; it is also, and especially, due to the falseness of their goal. ALL BABA and THE WAR OF THE WORLDS are fables which are practically equally artificial, gratuitous and arbitrary, which do not constitute a direct part of the world in which we live. On the opposite pole to the fabricated marvels, laboriously worked out and burdened with decrepit futility, there exist, everywhere about us, true mysteries which the motion picture camera discovers by itself, with a prodigious insight. And the revealing of this universal miracle does not require complicated technical refinements, photo-montage, painstaking as plastic surgery operations on images that are drilled, dissected, grafted back, sewed together again. Here, the only sorcery the film requires is the exercise of its basic faculty, of its organic and natural power of making things and events larger or smaller in space or time.

Magnified two hundred times, taking up the entire screen, our own eye, looking at us, troubles us, fills us with uneasiness. What - luminously aerial and saturated with sky, anointed with moisture and come from chasms in the sea - is this creature from a new realm, this living star, this reptilian egg, this intelligent mollusk waving its shell of lids? It comes and goes upon itself, it dilates and contracts its iris, and in these movements is seen that parcel of will which each cell, each organ, owes only to itself, without having received it from the organism which, on the contrary, receives and is moved by it.

In the presence of this, one thinks of those neurologists who hold that the brain is not alone in thinking, if, indeed, it does think; or those vitalists who believed the eye to have a soul. A soul? There exists as yet no word to

designate that secret freedom, that mysterious consciousness, that true enigma which resides in a mere close-up.

Slowed down eight times, a wave also develops an atmosphere of sympathetic magic. The sea changes its form and substance. Between water and ice, between liquidity and solidity, a new matter is created, an ocean of viscous movements, a universe entrapped in itself. Speeded up five hundred times, clouds cross the sky like rigid and crumbling arrows, which flake apart in their flight and whose debris welds itself together by chance to form other projectiles which are destined to blossom suddenly and to burst apart in their turn. Startling physics and strange mechanics which, however, are but a portrait -- seen in a certain perspective -- of the world in which we live.

Cinematographic sight allows us to note unsuspected depths of fairyland in nature which, by dint of always looking at it in the same manner, we have finally exhausted, by explaining it entirely, by even ceasing to see it. By withdrawing us from the routine of our sight, the film teaches us anew to be astonished in the presence of a reality which, perhaps, is still entirely uncomprehended, and of which perhaps no element is incomprehensible.

Unpublished manuscript: SOUND IN SLOW MOTION

Le Tempestaire
The microphone has crossed the threshold of the lips and slipped into man's inner world, where it now lies in wait for the intimations that remain unuttered, for the voice of conscience, for the ever-recurring obsessions of memory, for the ineffable shriek of the nightmare. Sound effects can now translate not merely the space of scenery, but the distances within the soul.

In view of this potential, it seems necessary to ascertain what contribution slow motion, which increasingly enriches the visual world with aspects hitherto unseen, could make to the sound track. I put this problem, from the technical point of view, to Leon Vareille, an acoustical engineer, who became interested in it and solved it, as the mathematicians say, with simplicity and ease. Thus, throughout TEMPESTAIRES, I was able to use the sounds of wind and sea at speeds varying as much as one-fourth from normal.

The effect of slow-motion sound, that is, of protracting acoustical cycles in time, is two-fold. First, lowering the frequency of vibrations lowers the tonality one octave with each unit decrease of speed. Thus, one may record the same sound in several different keys. This makes possible, by combination and montage, the creation of a whole musical score derived from a single sound. The composer Yves Baudrier wrote such a score with a great deal of ingenuity, and had the good taste to thread through this piece of natural music a single melodic line, which preserves the auditor's experience of pure sound without falsifying the purpose of the experiment.

Second, sonic slow motion makes possible the analysis of complex noises. Like the eye, the ear has only a very limited power of separation. The eye must have recourse to a slowing down, that is, to an enlargement in time, in order to see that the thrust of a boxer's arm, seemingly a simple and rectilinear movement when viewed at constant speed, is in reality a combination of multiple and infinitely varied muscular movements. Similarly, the ear needs sound to be enlarged in time, i.e., sonic slow motion, in order to discover, for instance, that the confused howling of a tempest, is, in a subtler reality, a manifold of distinct noises hitherto alien to the human ear, an apocalypse of shouts, coos, gurgles, squalls, detonations, timbres and accents for the most part as yet unnamed.

One could just as well take a less complex example: the noise of a door being opened or closed. Slowed down, this common noise reveals its complicated nature, its individual characteristics, its countless dramatic, comic, poetic and musical possibilities.

Certainly this inarticulate language of things is, for our ears most of the time, but a neutral or exasperating noise. The usual undulations on the sound track result in too many sounds in too little time, i.e., in tangled, compressed, crushed uproar. By separating sounds, by creating a kind of sonic close-ups, slow motion may enable all beings, and all objects, to speak.

We can already see, but soon we shall hear, the grass grow.

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 1932 - L'OR DE MER (Ed. Valois)
 *1934 - LES RECTEURS ET LA SIRENE (Ed. Aubier)
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 *1946 - L'INTELLIGENCE D'UNE MACHINE (Ed. Melot)
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FILMOGRAPHY

This filmography of the work of Jean Epstein was compiled by the editors from material supplied by Jean Benoit-Levy, Mlle. Marie Epstein, and use was also made of the list of films by Epstein published in CAHIERS DU CINEMA of June, 1953. That compilation, in turn, was collected by Andre Rossi from material supplied by Mlle. Marie Epstein, M. Henri Langlois, Lotte Eisner, A. Kamenka and "La Cinematographie Francaise".

A considerable effort has been made to present as complete a listing as possible. Persons possessing additional information are invited to communicate with the editors.

Jean Epstein's first contact with motion pictures came in 1920, when he worked with Auguste Lumiere on some bibliographical research, then briefly with Louis Delluc and Abel Gance (at the time LA ROUE was being made). He directed his first film, PASTEUR, in 1922.

- 1922 PASTEUR, made on occasion of the centennial celebrations.
 Directed by Jean Epstein, General supervision by Jean Benoit-Levy,
 Script by Edouard Epardaud, Camera: Edmond Floury.
 The cast: Pasteur - Henri Monnier, Pasteur as a child - Maurice Touzé,
 The little Meister - Jean Rauzena, Father Pasteur - Robert Tourneur.
 Interiors shot at Nadal studios, at Joinville-le-Pont, Exteriors on
 location at Arbois, Dole, Strasbourg, Alais, Pouilly-le-Fort, at the
 Pasteur Institutes of Paris and Lille, at the Auguste Lumiere labora-
 tories at Lyons, at the public schools (Ecoles Normales Supérieures) at
 Paris and the Alsace region.
 Produced by L'Edition Francaise Cinematographique, Distributed by Pathe-
 Consortium-Cinema. First shown at the Gaumont-Palace, Paris, in April
 1923. Length: app. 1200 meters (3957 feet).

LES VENDANGES (THE WINE HARVEST)

Documentary of the Narbonne Region. Camera: Edmond Floury, Produced by
 Edition Francaise Cinematographique.

Epstein accepts position with Pathe "to direct films", with a monthly
 salary of 2000 francs.

- 1923 L'AUBERGE ROUGE (THE RED INN)
 Adapted from the tale by Honore de Balzac. Adapted and directed by Jean
 Epstein. Artistic supervision: Louis Nalpas.
 Cast: Prosper Magnan - Leon Mathot, The innkeeper's daughter - Gina
 Manes, Frederic Taillefer - David Evremont, The innkeeper - Pierre Hot,
 Andre Taillefer - Jacques Christiani, also in the cast: Mrs. Courtois,
 Mrs. de Savoye, Mrs. Schmitt, Mr. Bourdel and R. Ferte.
 Interiors shot at Quenn. Studio Pathe, sets by Studio des Vignerons at
 Vincennes; Exteriors at the castle of Vincennes.
 Camera: Raoul Abourdier, assisted by Roger Hubert and Robert Lefebvre.
 Produced and distributed by Pathe-Consortium-Cinema. Length app. 1800
 meters (5907 feet).
 The entire budget for this film was 135,000 francs.

Note: The same Balzac story provided the basis for the recent film with
 Fernandel.

COEUR FIDELE (THE FAITHFUL HEART)

Written and directed by Jean Epstein. Camera. Paul Guichard, assisted by Stuckert and Leon Donnot.

Cast: Jean - Leon Mathot, Marie - Gina Manes, Little Paul - Edmond van Daele, Father Hochon - Benedict, Mother Hochon - Mrs. Maufroy, The invalid - Melle Marice, The woman of the port - Madeline Erickson. Interior sets at the Pathe Studio in Vincennes. Exteriors in Marseilles, (in the old port and at Manosque).

Produced and distributed by Pathe-Consortium-Cinema. Length app. 2000 meters (6563 feet).

LA MONTAGNE INFIDELE (THE FAITHLESS MOUNTAIN)

Documentary on the eruption of Mount Aetna in June, 1923.

Directed by Jean Epstein. Camera: Paul Guichard. Produced and distributed by Pathe-Consortium-Cinema. Length app. 600 meters (1969 feet).

LA BELLE NIVERNAISE (THE BEAUTY FROM NIVERNAIS)

From the short novel by Alphonse Daudet. Adapted and directed by Jean Epstein. Camera: Paul Guichard, assisted by Leon Donnot. Edited by Jean Epstein, assisted by R. Allinat.

Cast: Clara - Blanche Montel, Victor - Maurice Touze, Maugendre - David Evremond, the page - Max Bonnet, father Louveau - Pierre Hot, mother Louveau - Mrs. Lacroix. Also in the cast: G. Charliot, P. Ramelot, R. Chantal.

Interiors shot at the Pathe Studio, of the Vignerons at Vincennes. Exteriors on the Seine, between Paris and Rouen, and at Vincennes.

Produced and distributed by Pathe-Consortium-Cinema.

Length app. 1800 meters (5907 feet).

1924 LA GOUTTE DE SANG (A DROP OF BLOOD)

From the story by J. Mary. Partial direction by Jean Epstein. Assistant: G. Bernier; Camera: Paul Guichard, Leon Donnot; With Mrs. A. Lionel, Mrs. Symiane, and R. Karl, P. Rey, G. Charliot, Floresco, D. Mendaille, J. F. Martial. Interiors at the Pathe Studio in Vincennes, exteriors at Gorges de l'Herault, Nice.

As a result of difficulties with the Societe des Cineromans, Epstein abandoned this film in the middle, and it was completed under the direction of Mariaud, whose name appears in the titles. Most of the shots taken by Epstein were not used in the final montage.

LE LION DES MOGOLS (THE LION OF THE MOGOLS)

Scenario by Ivan Mosjoukine. Directed by Jean Epstein. Edited by Jean Epstein. Camera: Mundviller, Bourgassoff, Roudakoff. Sets by Lachakoff. Costumes designed by B. Bilinsky.

Cast: Prince Roundghito-Sing - Ivan Mosjoukine, Anna - Nathalie Lissenko, the banker Morel - Camille Bardou, Zemgali - Melle Alexiane, Kalavas - Zellas, the great Khan - Viguiet. Also in the cast: Vouthier, Delorme. Interiors shot at the Albatros studios in Montreuil and at Menchen d'Epinay. Exteriors in Algeria and the port of Marseilles.

Produced by Albatros Films. Distributed by Armor Films.

Length app. 2000 meters (6563 feet).

L'AFFICHE (THE POSTER)

Scenario by Marie Epstein. Directed by Jean Epstein. Camera: Maurice Desfassiaux, assisted by Chelles. Sets by B. Bilinsky, built by L. Meer-

son. Cast: Marie - Nathalie Lissenko, The director - Camille Bardou, Richard - Genica Missirio. Also in the cast: S. Dermoz, de Castillo, N. Constantini. Interiors shot at Albatros Studio at Montreuil. Exteriors at Bougival and in Paris. Produced by Albatros Films. Distributed by Armor Films. Length app. 2000 meters (6563 feet).

1925 PHOTOGENIES (PHOTOGENY)

Film edited from stock-footage at the request of the Theatre de Vieux Colombier. Improvised rapidly with the use of out-takes and newsreel material. This film was later destroyed.

LE DOUBLE AMOUR (DOUBLE LOVE)

Scenario by Marie Epstein. Directed by Jean Epstein. Camera by Maurice Desfassiaux, assisted by Roudakoff. Sets designed by Pierre Kefer, built by L. Meerson. Interiors shot at the Studio Albatros in Montreuil, exteriors at Nice and on the French Riviera.

Cast: Laure Maresco - Nathalie Lissenko, Jacques Solene - Jean Angelo, Decurgis - Camille Bardou, Jacques Maresco - Pierre Batcheff. Also in the cast: de la Croix, Pierre Hot, N. Constantini. Produced by Albatros Films, Distributed by Armor Films. Length app. 2000 meters (6563 feet).

LES AVENTURES DE ROBERT MACAIRE (THE ADVENTURES OF ROBERT MACAIRE)

Five episodes. Scenario by Charles Vayre from L'AUBERGE DES ADRETS.

Directed by Jean Epstein. Camera: Paul Guichard, assisted by J. Fouquet, N. Roudakoff. Sets designed by J. Mercier, built by L. Meerson.

Cast: Robert Macaire - Jean Angelo, Bertrand - Alex Allin, Melle de Sermeze - Suzanne Bianchetti, Rene de Sermeze - Nino Constantini, the policeman - Camille Bardou, Victoire - Lou Dovoyna, Henri - Jean-Pierre Stock, Cassagnol - Viguier, Jeanne - Marquissette Bosky. Also in the cast: M. Niblia, Dulong, Bondireff, Dulcart.

Interiors shot at Albatros studio in Montreuil. Exteriors at Dauphine, Grenoble, Vizille castle.

Produced by Albatros Films; Distributed by Armor Films.

Original length: 4500 meters (app. 14800 feet). Short version: 3000 meters (9800 feet).

1926 MAUPRAT

From the novel by George Sand. Directed by Jean Epstein. Assistant director: Luis Bunuel. Camera: Duverger, Sets designed by Pierre Kefer, Costumes by the Souplet company. Wigs by the Chanteau company. Stage director: Morlot.

Cast: Edmee de Mauprat - Sandra Milowanoff, Hubert de Mauprat and Tristan de Mauprat - Maurice Schutz, Bernard de Mauprat - Nino Constantini, Adhemar de la Marche - Rene Ferte, Marcasse - Alex Allin, Jean de Mauprat - Halma, the Abbé Aubert - Bondireff, Miss Leblanc - Line Dore.

Interiors at the Menchen Studio at Epinay. Exteriors at the valley of the Creuze. Also in the cast: M. J. Thierry, G. Dulong.

Produced by J. Epstein Films. Distributed by Selections Maurice Rouhier. Length app. 2000 meters (6563 feet).

AU PAYS DE GEORGE SAND (IN THE COUNTRY OF GEORGES SAND)

Documentary on the castle of Nohan. Camera: Perinal.

Produced by Jean Epstein Films.

1926-27. SIX ET DEMI-ONZE (UN KODAK) (SIX AND A HALF BY ELEVEN: A KODAK)
 Scenario by Marie Epstein. Directed by Jean Epstein. Camera by Georges Perinal. Sets designed by Pierre Kefer. Interiors at the Studio in Neuilly, (Roudes) and at the Theatre des Champs Elysees. Exteriors in Paris, Fontainebleau, Antibes and the Alps. Cast: Jerome de Ners - Edmond Van Daele, Jean de Ners - Nino Constantini, Marie - Suzy Pierson, Harry Gold - Rene Ferte. Produced by Jean Epstein Films. Distributed by Companie Universelle Cinematographique. Length app. 2000 meters (6563 feet).

1927 LA GLACE A TROIS FACES (THE THREE-SIDED MIRROR)
 From the short novel by Paul Morand. Scenario by Paul Morand. Directed by Jean Epstein. Camera: Eiwinger. Sets designed by Pierre Kefer. Interiors at the Roudes studio in Neuilly. Exteriors in Paris, L'Isle-Adam. Produced by Films Jean Epstein. Distributed by Studio des Ursulines. Cast: The man - Rene Ferte, Three women - Suzy Pierson, Jeanne Helbling, Olga Day, The misfit - Raymond Guerin. Length: app. 900 meters (2956 feet).

1929 SA TETE (HIS HEAD)
 Scenario by Jean Epstein. Directed by Jean Epstein. Camera: Albert Bres, assisted by Fred Alric. Assistant director: Marcel Cohen. Interiors at Studio Roudes at Neuilly. Exteriors in the region of Seine-et-Oise. Cast: Blanche - France Dholia, Jean - Rene Ferte, Paul - Nino Constantini, Mrs. Bonnard - Irma Perrotot. Produced by Gaston Roudes, distributed by Exclusivites Seyta. Talking version with narration by Bernard Zimmer. Length app. 900 meters (2956 feet)

1929-30 MOR'VRAN (THE SEA OF RAVENS)
 Neo-realist film by Jean Epstein. "Acted" by the fishermen of the Ile de Sein, near Brest. Camera: Alfred Guichard, Albert Bres and Marcel Rebriere. Assistant cameraman: Henri Chauffier. Natural sets and exteriors photographed on the Ile-de-Sein and in the bay of Finistere. Music by A. Tansman and Alexis Archangelsky. Post-synchronized with original Breton music.

Produced and distributed by Compagnie Universelle Cinematographique.
Length app. 900 meters. (2956 feet)

1930 LE PAS DE LA MULE (THE MULE'S PACE)

Documentary. Camera: A. Bres. Production: Vieux Colombier. Directed by Jean Epstein.

1931 NOTRE-DAME DE PARIS

Documentary. Directed by Jean Epstein. Camera: Emile Monniot, assisted by Raymond. Produced and distributed by Synchro-Cine. Post-synchronised. Length app. 300 meters (1000 feet)

LA CHANSON DES PEUPLIERS (THE SONG OF THE POPLARS)

A filmed song. Directed by Jean Epstein. Camera: Christian Matras. Produced and distributed by Synchro-Cine. Post-synchronised. Length app. 300 meters (1000 feet).

LE COR (THE HORN)

A filmed song. Camera: Christian Matras. Produced

LE VIEUX CHALAND (THE OLD SCOW)

A filmed song. Directed by Jean Epstein. Camera: Joseph Barth. Produced and distributed by Synchro-Cine. Post-synchronised. Length app. 300 meters. (1000 feet).

L'HOMME A L'HISPANO (THE MAN WITH THE "HISPANO" CAR)

From the novel by Pierre Frondaie. Written and directed by Jean Epstein. Camera: Armand Thirard and Joseph Barth, assisted by Philippe Agostini and Arthur. Assistant directors: Louis Delapree and Robert de Knyff. Music by Jean Wiener, conducted by Roger Desormiere. Sound recording by Courmes and Gernolle. Sets designed by Lauer & Co. Edited by Marthe Bassi. Interiors at the Braunberger-Richebe Studio at Billancourt. Exteriors at Cannes, in the Provence, at Biarritz and in the Basque country. Cast: Lady Oswill - Marie Bell, Georges Dewalter - Jean Murat, Lord Oswill - Georges Grossmith, Mrs. Deleone - Joan Helda, Montnormand - Louis

Gauthier, Deleone - Gaston Mauger, the governess - Mrs. Beaume.
Produced by Vandal and Delac. Distributed by Films P. J. de Venloo.
Length app. 2000 meters (6563 feet).

- 1933 LA CHATELAINNE DU LIBAN (THE LADY OF THE LEBANESE MANOR)
From the novel by Pierre Benoit. Written and directed by Jean Epstein.
Dialogue by Pierre Benoit. Camera: Armand Thirard, Joseph Barth and
Christian Matras. Assistant directors: Ary Sadoul and Pierre Duval. Sets
designed by Aguetand and Bouxin. Music by Alexander Tansman. Sound re-
cording by Bauge. Interiors at Studio Pathe-Francoeur. Exteriors in Bey-
ruth (Lebanon), Palmyra (Syria) and at Avignon. Cast: Athelstane - Miss
Spinelly, Captain Domevre - Jean Murat, Colonel Hobson - Georges Grossmith,
Captain Walter - Ernest Ferny, the woman-General - Marguerite Templey,
Michele - Michele Verly, Maroussia - Gaby Basset, Djoun - Chakatouny,
Gardafuy - George, Colonel Hennequin - Marnay, Colonel Marret - Prieur,
The General - Decoeur.
Produced by Vandal and Delac. Distributed by P. J. de Venloo.
Length app. 2400 meters (7876 feet).
- 1934 CHANSON D'ARMOR (SONG OF ARMORICA)
After Jean des Cognets. Adapted and directed by Jean Epstein. Ballad-type
documentary, spoken in Breton language. Camera: Jean Lucas, assisted by
Georges Lucas and Raymond Raynal. Assistant director: Pierre Duval. Music
by Jacques Larmanjat, conducted by Roger Desormiere. Choirs and dances
arranged by Emile Cuff, assisted by Suscinio. Sound recording by Behrens.
Edited by Marthe Poncin. Breton Dialogue by Fanch Gourvil. Natural settings
and exteriors in Bretagne. Cast: Jean-Marie Maudez - Yvon Le Mar'Hadour,
Rozen - Solange Montchatre, the guardian - Fanch Gourvil, the innocent one
- Viguiet, the fiancé - Georges Prieur, Miss Maudez - Marinette Fournis.
Produced by Ouest-Eclair at Rennes. Distributed by Pathe.
Length app. 1200 meters (3938 feet).
- LA VIE D'UN GRAND JOURNAL (THE LIFE OF A GREAT NEWSPAPER)
Documentary. Directed by Jean Epstein. Camera: Jean and Georges Lucas,
produced by Ouest-Eclair.
- 1935 MARIUS ET OLIVE A PARIS (MARIUS AND OLIVE IN PARIS)
Scenario by Pages. Directed by Jean Epstein. Assistant director: Pierre
Duval. Camera: Joseph Barth and Agostini. Music by Jean Wiener. Interiors
at Studio Photosonor. Exteriors in Marseilles. Produced by Cinemonde. In
the cast: M. Cheirel, I. Meery, L. Clody, Mr. Barancey, R. Sarvil, Pitouto.
The film was not exploited properly and Jean Epstein withdrew his name
from the title credits.
- 1936 COEUR DE GUEUX (CUOR DI VAGABONDO) (HEART OF THE HOBOES)
Scenario by G.B.Seyta, After A. Machard. Adaptation and direction by Jean
Epstein. Dialogue and Lyrics by Camille Francois. Camera: Mario Albertelli,
Tielzi, assisted by Angarelli. Assistant director: Pierre Duval. Music by
Jean Lenoir and J. Dallin. Assistant for the Italian version: Giacomo For-
zano. Sets designed by Lucca. Director of production: G.B.Seyta. Interiors
at the Forzano Studio and at the Studio Tirrenia at Marina de Pisa. Ex-
teriors in the environments of Pisa, Florence and Livorno. Cast: Claude -
Madeleine Renaud, father Larue - Ermete Zacconi, Jean Berthier - Andre
Burgere, Charles - Charles Deschamps, Marthe - Violette Napierska, Prosper
- Pitouto, Cloclo - Jacky Vilmon, Claude's friend - Suzy Wall, stranger -
Teddy Michaux, Paul - Philippe Janvier. Also in the cast: Pierre Hot.

Produced by Seyta and Forzano Films. Distributed by Compagnie Universelle Cinematographique. Length app. 2400 meters (7876 feet).

LA BRETAGNE (BRITTANY)

Documentary for the exposition of Art and Techniques. Directed by Jean Epstein. Narration by Leandre Vaillat. Camera: Georges Lucas, assisted by Robert Ruth. Music by Henri Casadessus. Songs performed by Yvon Le Mar'Hadour. Dances arranged by Emile Cueff. Sound recording by Behrens. Produced by Jean Benoit-Levy and Grands Reseaux Francais. Distributed by Atlantic Film. Length app. 1200 meters (3938 feet).

LA BOURGOGNE (BURGUNDY)

Documentary for the exposition of Arts and Techniques. Directed by Jean Epstein. Narration by Leandre Vaillat. Camera: Georges Lucas, assisted by Robert Ruth. Assistant director: Pierre Duval. Music by Henri Casadessus. Sound recording by Behrens. Production and distribution: Grands Reseaux Francais and Atlantic Films. Length app. 900 meters (2956 feet).

1937 VIVE LA VIE (LONG LIVE LIFE!)

Scenario by Marie Epstein and Jean Benoit-Levy. Directed by Jean Epstein. Documentary produced for the French Youth Hostel Association. Hostellers "acted" by Pierre-Olivier de Marichard, Boris Kossloff, Jean Bessiere, Georges Leroy, Jacques Brochard, Henri Signoret. Camera: Jean Lucas and Georges Lucas, assisted by Robert Ruth. Assistant director: Pierre Duval. Music by Jean Wiener. Sound recording by Behrens. Interiors at the Billancourt studio. Natural settings and exteriors at the youth hostels of Aix en Provence, Aubagne, Apt and in the valley of Loups. Produced by Jean Benoit-Levy. Distributed by the ministry of Public Entertainment. Length app. 1200 meters (3938 feet).

LA FEMME DU BOUT DU MONDE (THE WOMAN FROM THE END OF THE WORLD)

From the novel by Alain Serdac. Adapted and directed by Jean Epstein. Camera: Riccioni and Cotteret, assisted by Franqui and Joseph Braun. Assistant director: Pierre Duval. Director of Production: Jean Rossi. Music by Jean Wiener. Sound recording by Behrens. Sets designed by Roger Berteaux at the Courbevoie studio. Interiors at Studio Francois Premier. Exteriors on the island of Ouessant. Cast: Durc, the mechanic - Charles Vanel, Anna - Germaine Rouer, Lieut. Jacques - Jean-Pierre Aumont, Bourrhis - Alexandre Rignault, Capt. Sueur - Philippe Richard, Planque - Douking, Jimmy - Jacky Vilmont, shipowner - Robert Le Vigan, Molinier, the navigator - Paul Azais. Also in the cast: J. Appert, Beauchamp, Vitray. This film was released under the occupation without credit to Epstein. Produced by Films Renaud-Decker, Distributed by Osso Films. Length app. 2400 meters (7876 feet).

1938 LES BATISSEURS (THE BUILDERS)

Documentary. Scenario by Jeander. Directed by Jean Epstein. "Acted" by construction workers. Camera: Georges Lucas and Robert Ruth. Assistant director: Pierre Duval. Sets: Roger Berteaux. Music by Hoeree and Honegger. Sound recording by Behrens, assisted by Maxime Bachellerie. Interiors at La Garenne Studio. Exteriors at Paris, Chartres, St.-Cloud, etc. Produced by the National Federation of Construction. Distributed by Cine-Liberte and the Maison des Techniques. Length app. 900 meters (2956 feet).

LA RELEVE (THE RELIEF)

Documentary. Camera: Georges Lucas, Robert Ruth. Produced by Cine-Liberte.

EAU-VIVE (SPRING WATER)

Documentary. Written and directed by Jean Epstein. In the cast: Florence Page, Jacques Mancier, Philippe Richard, Hubert Timperi, Viguiers, Barge, Bowden, Zehr. Camera: Georges Lucas and Pierre Bachelet. Assistant directors: Pierre Duval and Jacques Brochard. Interiors at the La Garenne studios. Exteriors at Rochefort en Yveline. Produced by Jean Benoit-Levy. Distributed privately. Length app 1200 meters (3938 feet).

1939

ARTERES DE FRANCE (ARTERIES OF FRANCE)

Documentary produced for the French section of the International Exposition in New York. Scenario by Henri Champly. Directed by Jean Epstein, in collaboration with Rene Lucot. Camera: Georges Lucas and Jean Lucas. Assistant director: Pierre Duval. Cooperative production of Les Artisans D'Art du Cinema. Distributed by Robert de Nesles. Music by Henri Casadessus, Sound recording by Behrens. Length app. 600 meters (2039 feet).

1948

LES FEUX DE LA MER (THE FIRES OF THE SEA)

A film by Jean Epstein. "Acted" by lighthouse keepers on the island of Ouessant and the coast of Finistere. Camera: Pierre Bachelet, assisted by Andre Bernard. Assistant directors: Pierre Duval and Jacques Duchateau. Musical score by Yves Baudrier. Sound recording by Leon Vareille. Produced by Films Etienne Lallier for the United Nations. Distributed by the UN. Length app. 600 meters (2039 feet).

Note: Contrary to information published elsewhere, Jean Epstein never directed films for television in the United States.

In appreciation

The editors wish to express their most sincere gratitude for their invaluable and consistent cooperation to Miss Marie Epstein, without whose undying efforts and continuous and extensive assistance neither this showing nor this booklet could have become a reality; to Jean Benoit-Levy, whose initial support and unrelenting perseverance paved the way and overcame the many obstacles which besought us; to Henri Langlois and the Cinematheque Francaise, who gave of their time and effort in order to provide the films for this screening and of whose courageous spirit and militant support of the work of Jean Epstein this event is but a small outcrop; to Pierre Donzelot, the French Ministry of National Education and the French Embassy's Cultural Services in New York, thanks to whose cooperation these films were brought to the United States, and who helped both morally and materially in the preparation of material for this booklet; to the Museum of Modern Art film library in New York, and Richard Griffith, its curator, for making the actual presentation of these films possible and for their

Editor's notes

The article by Henri Langlois appearing on page 12 was first published in CAHIERS DU CINEMA of June 1953, and is here reproduced by permission.

The tributes to Jean Epstein by Cocteau, Gance and Kamenka also first appeared in CAHIERS DU CINEMA of June 1953. (Pages 27-28)

The appreciation by Catherine Wuenschel on page 29 first appeared in SIGHT AND SOUND, Oct-Dec 1953.

All other material not written especially for this booklet is credited to its source in the text.

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This presentation initiated and organized by the Group for Film Study.

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